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[SELF-EXAMINATION.]

## FICKLE FORTUNE.

By the Author of "Maurice Durant," etc.

### CHAPTER XXVI.

She walks in beauty, like the night,  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes. *Byron.*

CARNARVON HOUSE was one blaze of light. The windows were like so many sides to a lantern, all staringly, dazingly brilliant against the dark sky and dun trees of the park of Hyde.

It was eleven o'clock and the crack band which was performing at the countess's that evening had commenced Mozart's Sixth as Reginald Dartmouth entered the first saloon.

He was alone, Sir Charles having waited at his chambers for him for two hours beyond the appointed time and started without him, concluding that the languid captain had not felt in the cue for the soirée—or something had happened to prevent his coming.

As Reginald Dartmouth paced up the stairs slowly he had leisure to note the length of costly Turkish that lined the marble steps and the above-price statuettes which gleamed from rose-tinted niches of the frescoed corridor.

Priceless exotics were grouped at every available corner, and added their perfume to the subtle scent that pervaded the atmosphere.

Reception saloons opened out from the right, glistening with crimson satin and gold, black ebony and silver, and lit up by carefully shaded, soft-tinted lights, cunningly upheld and arranged amongst groups of delicate statuary, the master-pieces of dead-and-gone Roman sculptors, Grazini, Fialtor, and Ferroni.

On the left of the softly lighted corridor hung a wealth of pictures, old and new—here a Rubens, red and glowing, there a stately Vandyke, and farther on a Carlo Dolci, soft, melting and ethereal.

With a keen glance of his quick eyes Reginald

Dartmouth took in these evidences of extraordinary wealth and smiled.

"Princely indeed must be the Countess Vitzarelli's fortune," he muttered.

Then he passed through the arched entrance, draped with lace and hangings of crimson and gold, into the brilliantly lighted saloon.

It was crowded, and Reginald Dartmouth saw that the crowd consisted of the best and choicest of the Upper Ten.

Here was the Duke of Tynsel, there the Marquis of Cliefden, and, talking with a pleasant voice to the beautiful hostess, the Prince of Flamingo, covered with orders, that sparkled upon his breast as the dew glistens on the morning blue-bells.

Reginald Dartmouth was a well-known man, and nods and bows and wreathed smiles welcomed his tall, lithe figure as he made his way to the countess.

The prince walked away as he came up, and Madame Campani, to whom she was speaking, said, loud enough for him to hear:

"Captain Dartmouth approaches, Lucille."

Then she turned and held out her hand.

"It is good of you," she murmured, musically.

"I had given you up. Sir Charles assured me that you were detained. I felt disappointed, for I like to count upon my friends."

Reginald Dartmouth inclined his head.

"The Countess Vitzarelli may always with true assurance count on me as her most devoted slave."

"Slave!" repeated the beautiful woman. "We have no slaves now, Signor Captain, or if there be slaves it is we—the women."

"Then to what depth must we men descend, as we perforce must be so infinitely the lower?" he replied, with his rare smile. "If you are slaves we—"

"Are the chains that bind us!" she put in, with a low ripple of laughter. "Come, Captain Dartmouth, I will not argue—in mercy—for I never knew man or woman that could match me for perversity or stubbornness. What say you, madam?"

"That I agree with you, Lucille, and advise Cap-

tain Dartmouth to take the warning," was the response.

"It comes as a command," said Reginald, "and I obey. If the countess should please to say the moon's the sun I'll move to its shadow and grumble at its heat!"

The countess laughed.

"Come, sir," she said, "that is slavery indeed, most abject and complete. I will not be so exacting. You shall keep your moon cold and irreproachable. And now give me your escort to the balcony, if you will. I have promised to decide between two chess players who have thrown the responsibility of a judgment on my shoulders, for the best of all reasons that I know nothing at all about the rules of the game."

"Then the judgment will go as usual, for most decisions are fixed and given on the same delicious principle. Allow me."

And with the beautiful countess on his arm he made his way to the chess players.

Leaving her at the table, where she was immediately surrounded by an eager crowd of courtiers, Reginald Dartmouth went in search of Sir Charles Anderson.

He found him seated in a recess talking with a little white-haired old gentleman with a decided Roman cast of face and two restless gray eyes that flashed here, there, and everywhere, settling with a questioning gaze upon the captain's face.

"Hullo!" said Sir Charles, "here you are at last. I gave you up. Count, allow me to introduce you Captain Dartmouth, Count Vitzarelli," etc.

Reginald Dartmouth scanned the wrinkled face beneath his brows—there was no resemblance, not the slightest, to the beautiful countess. Could he be her father?

They got into conversation: the old count was a Republican and heart and soul sold to his "Italia."

He commenced talking Roman politics immediately, and Captain Dartmouth, much to Sir Charles's astonishment, listened attentively and discussed the question in all its details.

The young baronet, lounging against one of the carved pillars of the recess, was filled with wonder, and with a sigh concluded that his friend Captain Reginald Dartmouth was one of those individuals no fellow could understand.

"Who'd have thought Regy would have known, much less cared anything for this sort of thing?" he muttered, as the captain said with emphatic distinctness in a reply to an observation of the old count's:

"Italy is reposing on the crater of a slumbering volcano. Presently there will come the explosion, and in the flame and fire the coming man will be revealed."

The Republican count was delighted.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "you speak the sentiment and belief of my own heart."

And he held out his long, thin hand, which Reginald Dartmouth pressed with respectful eagerness.

The next moment the prince came up, and the count, stopping to express a sincere wish that he might meet with "Capitaine Dartemoute" again, went off on his highness's arm.

Sir Charles threw himself down upon the seat with a comical groan.

"Heavens, Dartmouth, you are as good as a play. One continual surprise. By Jove, you talked like an Italian politician. Surprised me and the old boy too!"

"To command the astonishment of the first is not a difficult task," retorted Reginald Dartmouth, with the sarcastic inflection of his voice that made men's hearts writhe and grow hot.

Sir Charles's face flushed, but he only said:

"You're not in a good temper, old fellow, although you made an easy conquest of the count. Come, let us have a hand at cards; Dalton and some of the other fellows are at it in one of the card-rooms."

"I am with you all my heart," said the captain, and arm in arm the two made their way to the card-room, a small saloon tapestried with purple velvet and furnished in buhl and ormolu.

It was well into the small hours before they rose. The captain had had bad luck—some said he had shown bad play, throwing chances away with a careless indifference that was strange to him.

Perhaps his thoughts were not confined to the cards. In any case it was with a wearied and bored look that he rose, and, still accompanied by Sir Charles, returned to the principal saloon.

It was nearly empty, only half a dozen or so chatting in corners, and adding to the huge look of the place by the insignificance of their number.

As they were descending the stairs Sir Charles pulled up short.

"By Jove, Dartmouth," he exclaimed, looking annoyed. "I forgot to give Dalton that I O U. Look here, you go on, and I'll run back and find him. Confoundedly stupid of me. I will not be a minute. Meet you at the other door."

And he moved away as he spoke.

He had gone before Reginald Dartmouth could remind him that he was a stranger to the place, and did not know where to find the other door.

And the captain, with a shrug of contempt at the baronet's forgetfulness, sauntered slowly down the broad staircase.

His mind was hard at work as he trod the marble hall, and he was wondering what nameless charm the Countess Vitzarelli possessed which kept her face and form, her smile and liquid voice haunting his mind and heart.

He had seen many beautiful women—some more beautiful, if that were possible, than she, but none had possessed the power to hold his thoughts in bondage as this woman—this countess had done.

"Which and where is the other entrance?" he asked of one of the officials, a footman, decked out in the most resplendent of liveries, and glistening with gold lace and plush.

"To the right or the left, signor?" returned the man, an Italian.

"It would have saved your friends an immensity of trouble, Sir Charles Anderson, if your fate had been gracious enough to give you brains," muttered Reginald Dartmouth. "Which door does the idiot mean? Had I not asked him to supper I might leave him to disentangle the knot his stupidity has tied, but as it is I suppose I must go back."

And with a frown he retraced his steps.

The large saloon was empty. Not even a footman was in sight, and he was passing through it in the direction of the door at the farther end when the glimmer of a satin dress at one of the windows of the balcony caught his attention.

He stopped, and, out of curiosity, walked towards the window.

Before he had reached it he saw that the dress belonged to the Countess Vitzarelli, and that that lady herself was leaning on the balcony with her hands clasped on her chin and her face turned towards the sky.

At that moment, as he stood watching her, she turned slightly, but sufficiently for him to see her face distinctly.

He started with astonishment.

It was white, anxious, wistful, and filled with pain or unsatisfied longing, and—yes, there could be no doubt of it—the pale cheeks were dotted with tears.

He drew back behind the curtain, and, waiting long enough only to hear a deep, long-drawn sigh and these words "How long? how long?" he walked from the saloon.

"Soh!" he muttered, as he stepped into his private cab. "Madame the countess has a secret and a mystery!"

#### CHAPTER XXVII.

No hand so lavish as the hand that spends  
Wealth got by false and thievish ends.

THE SQUIRE had been resting in his grave only a month, but a great change had been wrought at the Dale.

Some astonishment had been felt and expressed by the country folks at the contents of the last will, and its mysterious and sudden manufacture, together with the disappearance of Hugh and Grace Darrell, had been much gossiped about.

It was astonishing, people said, that Squire Darrell should so far have forgotten what he owed the unfortunate young man and woman who had both been taught to look upon the Dale as their future inheritance, and at the last moment, by a short, concise, and barely legal will, should have left the vast property to Captain Dartmouth, who, though his nephew, had paid him no attention until the last few months of the old man's life.

Much more than this even did Mr. Lord Brandon, the Wheatleys and the mighty ones of that portion of the earth say; but as far as the lucky man was concerned they were welcome to say what they pleased.

Captain Reginald Dartmouth, triumphant and victorious, cared nothing for the gossiping; let them laugh who win, says the old adage, and though the handsome captain did laugh he smiled sweetly when the world's asides were wafted to him.

He was secure—perfectly. If there existed any ground for a legal quibble there was no one, Hugh and Grace having disappeared, to come forward and urge it.

Captain Reginald Dartmouth was possessor of the Dale estates and twenty thousand a year.

Twenty thousand a year!

It was a large sum, far larger than he had expected to receive—far larger than he could understand the squire's possessing until Mr. Reeves explained that for thirty years the sun of prosperity had never set upon the Dale, and that the squire, besides living very far within his income, had been fortunate with every speculation he had launched into.

Some men have a Midasian faculty of turning everything they touch into gold. The irritable, unhappy, and dissipated squire had been one of them.

For the county families the captain cared nothing—that is at present.

He was a man of the world and knew that nothing is so potent, so all conquering as time.

Give him time, and, backed up with a fine estate, and twenty thousand a year, he, Captain Dartmouth, would, if he so chose, make himself the most popular man of the county.

For the present he contented himself with leaving his card in return for those of the Brandons and Wheatleys, but made an exception to the rule in favour of Miss Goodman.

But at the Warren he met with the most decided repulse.

When he drove over in his new, elegantly appointed brougham, and dressed in deep but very becoming mourning, he was met with the message that:

"Miss Rebecca was too unwell to see visitors, and trusted Captain Dartmouth would excuse," etc., etc., etc.

This puzzled him.

He could not get at the reason of it. Granted that Miss Goodman feared and disliked him, the problem was—why?

He had done nothing—at least, that she or any one else could know of—to lose her esteem.

He had always tried to win her over, feeling that she was too wealthy and powerful, and that the Warren was too near to the Dale, to render the chance of her being useful to him a remote one.

What was the reason?

He went up to town and took a house near the Park.

It was a grand mansion, but not good enough for him.

He called in two of the principal decorators and upholsterers in London, and received them while he was at a mid-day breakfast.

One was retained to render the Park Lane house fit for him, the other was to repair to the Dale with

an army of workmen and thoroughly renovate, decorate and furnish that.

He had determined upon the styles for each, and in his languid way set forth what he wanted.

The two men, used as they were to lavish outlay and extravagant tastes, stared.

"It will be palatial," one exclaimed.

"And the expense, my lord," murmured the other.

"I am not 'my lord,'" retorted the captain, quietly. "But I am glad to hear you have such a good opinion of my taste. As to the expense give me a rough idea of what you think the sum total will be."

The two men laid their heads together.

"The Park Lane villa will cost over ten thousand pounds, my lord—I should say, sir."

"Good—and the Dale?"

"More, sir—fifteen, perhaps!"

"So much? Very good. Carry out my plans and ideas in their entirety, and I shall not complain."

The two men backed out, as if from royalty, and Captain Dartmouth went on with his chocolate, muttering:

"Twenty-five thousand pounds. It is not bad for a start. Well, I am no fool; money is to be enjoyed, not hoarded. I have won the stakes, it is fitting I should spend them."

For a month, while the lawyers were at work preparing the statements, Captain Dartmouth remained quiet, drawing plans for the two residences, purchasing carriages and horses, and in other and various ways preparing for the life of luxury he meant to live.

He was always one of the men club idlers and military do-nothings look up to, even when a comparatively poor man—they worshipped him now and courted him at every opportunity.

Stories, more or less coloured, of his lavish expenditure, his enormous estate, fabulous wealth, his houses, carriages, horses, jewels, and retainers were circulated through the regions of Ton daily.

Eager mothers with marriageable daughters looked anxious and excited when he came near them.

He never entered ball room, theatre, concert hall, or dining-room but the whispered "Captain Dartmouth, of the Dale—richest man of the season," etc., etc., was sent round the circle.

He gloried in it.

It was his reward and he revelled in it.

The flattery, the fulsome adulation, the golden-eagle adoration of the mass was as honey to him, and in the atmosphere of the world's most beaming smile he sensed himself and was almost happy.

Ah, almost—it is like the dreadful words "but" and "if."

Almost happy!

The world, gazing admiringly at his calm and serene face, lit up at rare times with the flash of the fleet smile, would have declared him the happiest man in Christendom, but it never saw him without the mask.

It lost him when the lights went out and the music ceased.

If it could have followed him home—could have penetrated the thick doors of his besilken and besatined bed-chamber, and stood to gaze even for a moment upon the sleeping face, not still, calm and smiling then, but heavy and working, with cold drops of perspiration upon the white forehead and tight, care-worn wrinkles round the eyes and mouth—to be smoothed away with careful solicitude when he awoke—if it could have seen the long white hand clenched, as if with rage, passion, or, worse, a deadly fear, and heard the stifled groan with which he started from the heavy, terror-fraught dream, the world might have altered its opinion and said, with a fashionable sigh, that even the possessor of twenty thousand a year, youth, and a handsome face, was not perfectly happy.

But the world saw and knew nothing of this.

Captain Dartmouth's nights were for himself; and whatever horrors and visions and dreams attended his sleeping hours he bore them uncomplainingly and in silence.

Perhaps he took them as a part of the bargain, as a necessary accompaniment of his great fortune, reckoned them as a portion of the price he had paid for his wealth and position.

The month passed, and while looking round for some other exome for expenditure he met and had the conversation with Sir Charles Anderson that has been recorded.

From the Park he had gone—still the same cold and seemingly purposeless man—to the Countess Vitzarelli's.

From there he had reached home changed, and that most utterly.

A touch of the magic wand had awakened him to the consciousness that his heart still lived, and more, that it throbbed with a new hope and a new purpose.

He had thought it dead—dead and buried with the



too faithful Bella, but he discovered that it had sprung from the ashes, and that it burnt with a fiercer and more intense fire than before.

As he stood before the mirror and regarded the placid, almost unnaturally calm face reflected there he murmured, as a man does who hides nothing from himself, who plays at no hide and seek with his own conscience:

"I love Lucilla, Countess Vitzarelli—I, who thought to love no more! And why? Who shall say? perhaps because—because—there is the shadow of a likeness in her face and form to her who died for love of me. Perhaps because I have seen by chance behind the mask of peace and prosperity she wears so well. Perhaps because I see a fitting soul to link with mine. For all these reasons, perchance. But—reason or none, 'tis the same—I, Reginald Dartmouth, love her."

And for Reginald Dartmouth to say he loved, was to say that he meant to woo, and, by fair means or foul win.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

Whose game was empire, and whose stakes were thrones,  
Whose table earth—whose dice were human bones!

*Byron.*

"AND so you think that there is something more than appears on the surface in the Vitzarelli?"

The speaker was Reginald Dartmouth, lounging on a fauteuil in the private ball room of the Duke of Tetherton. The person to whom the question was addressed was a foreign diplomat, an astute man of the world, behind the political scenes of every court in Europe, and possessing a key to the most intricate mazes of diplomatic life.

The tone of the question was careless, almost indifferent, touched only with a slight appearance of interest and amused curiosity—nothing more.

Sir Bardolph smiled the smile that had puzzled many a crowned head.

"Perhaps," he said, softly. "We are all something more than appears on the surface, mon cher captain. Men do not wear their hearts upon their sleeves for daws to peck at now—women have long discontinued to do so. Look around you and tell me how much, or rather confess how little you know of the secret purposes and aims of this roomful. I am behind the scenes a great deal, and in my flights from land to land, from court to court, see and hear many things, but—bah! it is after all but scratching the outside lava of the volcano; to reach the fire, to discover where, how, and why the fire smoulders and burns, that is impossible. Look you, there, in that corner, looking like an idiot or a child of three years, sits one of the puppet pullers of the world. His name is Lornstoff. See him twittering like a quavery to the little old lady by his side. They are talking of the last song, criticizing the dresses, and doing it with the greatest interest; but, lo! the mind has unchained the tongue, but remained at its post. He is thinking, thinking, deciding, at this moment perhaps, the day for the Germans to pour down with the cry of 'War' upon the ill-fated Danes—or Austrians, as the case may be."

Captain Dartmouth was silent.

The diplomat went on:

"As for madame the countess and the white-haired Elrudo, their game—I speak not vulgarly, but as one who remembers that we are all 'players' in another sense as well as the theatrical one—their game is broken in two parts. One, the man's, is Italy, the other, the countess's, is—what shall I say? It may be Italy, for she is an Italian—at least by repute. Italy is in a transition state. Plots and conspiracies are being hatched every hour. In this room are a dozen men—ay, and women too—who have sworn at the risk of their lives to uphold the cause of what they call Liberty. At the risk of their lives. One and all hold their existences in their hands. They are conspirators, dyed with blood. Let their secret transpire and their heads must pay the forfeit or they must be banished from their dear Italy, which they would consider infinitely worse. They have pledged themselves to overthrow the present state of things, and have come over here to plot."

"But," and Reginald Dartmouth smiled subtly, "but too many to hold a secret, they say, is to let it step 'twixt finger and thumb. One may turn traitor."

Bardolph smiled.

"No," he said, coolly, "for every man has pledged himself to do more than keep the faith himself, he has taken an oath more terrible and awe-inspiring than I can tell to avenge the cause on him who plays false. Every man knows that, if he turned traitor at sunset, before sunrise a hundred—a thousand men would be on his track, a thousand daggers would be thirsting for his blood. There would be no escape. Let him fly to the ice of Siberia and the avenger would appear in the shape of the ferryman who

carried him over the stream. Let him climb the highest snow points of Switzerland and one of the band would strike in the form of his guide. Here, where safety is most to be found, in the ball-rooms and public places of London, the relentless daggers would be waiting their opportunity. He would find the assassin beside his bed at midnight, would feel his steel as he entered his carriage, or from some flower tendered by the hand of beauty inhale the fatal odour of the deadly poison pressed into the service of the terrible band. No, there can be no traitors, for by this time all have learnt that from treason the next step is to death."

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed Captain Dartmouth. "It reads like a page from one of our popular romances. Secret society; members pledged by terrible oath; treason punished by death! My dear Sir Bardolph, here are the ingredients for a striking melodrama."

The diplomat smiled.

"It is not unnatural or unreasonable that you should receive my revelations rather incredulously. It is an extraordinary state of things, but of its truth there can be doubt. Nay, more, I think I can give you some proof. See that lady yonder."

And he glanced in the direction of the Countess Vitzarelli, who at that moment entered the room.

"I see her," replied Reginald Dartmouth, with the slightest flush of emotion.

"She is coming this way," said Sir Bardolph. "Now watch me."

The countess, superb with her Southern beauty and princely diamonds, glided towards them.

As Reginald rose and took her proffered hand she smiled and murmured a few words of greeting.

Reginald Dartmouth, while replying with reverential respect, saw with a glance of his quick eyes that Sir Bardolph had placed one finger upon his heart as he rose and kept it there for a moment, indeed until he had elicited the signal of response from the countess, who with a peculiar smile, full of meaning and significant, pressed her small taper finger to her side and glided on.

Sir Bardolph sank into his seat with a quiet smile of triumph.

Reginald Dartmouth stroked his moustache thoughtfully.

"You observed?" said Sir Bardolph.

Reginald Dartmouth inclined his head.

"I saw you place your forefinger against your heart and fancied that the Countess Vitzarelli answered the gesture."

"It was no fancy," replied Sir Bardolph. "That is the secret sign—or at least one of them—whereby we know each other."

"You then are of the band?" queried the captain.

"I am a member, or at least am cognizant of nearly all the secret societies of Europe," retorted Sir Bardolph.

"And, pardon me, but would not this disclosure you have just made to me of the sign be considered to savour of treason?"

Sir Bardolph shook his head.

"I am a favoured individual," he said; "I am allowed a very wide margin. They know that I could quash them all, Communists, Carlists, Reds, one and all, and so let me be. Besides," and he rose with a repetition of the diplomatic smile, "it is scarcely a revelation—'tis but at best a premature initiation, for if I mistake not Captain Dartmouth will soon be enrolled amongst the Vitzarelli followers."

Reginald Dartmouth frowned and shot a glance of anger after the languid, self-possessed figure. He disliked being read more than most men, but he knew his man too well to resent it. Few secrets were such to Sir Bardolph.

Reginald Dartmouth sat and pondered a little while, then rose and walked to one of the saloons. It was a high gala night, and many of the artistes from the opera house were filtered through the concert-rooms of the duchess. Some were preparing to sing as he entered, and the guests were seated in front of the velvet-covered platform, lounging on the fauteuils and against the huge marble pillars and strolling round the balconies and corridors.

Reginald Dartmouth had little difficulty in finding the count.

His white head was seen shining amidst a small group of Italians and Englishmen conversing at one of the deep windows.

As he sauntered towards them the eagle eyes of the old Italian caught sight of him, and a quick smile of welcome and recognition passed over his intellectual face.

He left the group as Reginald Dartmouth came towards it, and flanking his arm through his said:

"Ah, captain, I have been looking for you everywhere. This place is like a wilderness; our palaces are nothing to it, though they have the name for hugeness. Ah, you English are the grand people in everything."

Captain Dartmouth smiled.

"And yet we have not eclipsed the fame of your countrymen, my lord. Enough is still left of ancient Rome to remind us of our littleness."

"Ah! Rome!" sighed the count, shooting a sharp glance of scrutiny at the impassable face above him. "Ah, Rome! Poor Rome! Captain Dartmouth, to hear that name is to feel the opening of a wound. Rome! you touch a chord when you speak it, a chord that is as fresh and as sharp within this old heart as when it first rang out to the grand name. Italy! Rome! There are hundreds—nay thousands of Italians ready to die for the mere names."

Reginald Dartmouth looked interested. "And not only Italians, my lord," he answered, throwing a fire into his low voice that thrilled the heart of the old Italian, "but Englishmen. Rome belongs to all the world in one sense, and when the cry for liberty goes up more than the Italians will help to swell the chorus."

The old count's face flushed, and with a trembling hand he led, almost dragged his companion aside.

"Do I blunder, Captain Dartmouth—do I misunderstand the full purport of your words—noble words!—or do you imply that you are ready to become one of us?"

His eager, excited voice was hushed and cautious, his dark, flashing eyes were fixed upon the calm, calculating ones of Reginald.

Before he could reply the Countess Vitzarelli passed behind one of the pillars, leaning on the arm of the duke.

Reginald Dartmouth flushed again as he saw the beautiful face, and in almost as eager a voice said:

"Let me know more, count, or rather tell me in a word if you are fighting for Italy and freedom, and—I am with you."

The count grasped his hand.

"We are. What else could we be for? Noble captain! you have filled me with fresh blood, fresh hope. With such as you at our side we cannot fail."

Reginald Dartmouth was about to speak, but the count ran on rapidly.

"To-night we meet at the usual rendezvous. It is a select assemblage of the heads and chiefs. You will honour us by making one of the council? Lucilla—the countess—goes from here to the council-chamber. May I reckon on your accompanying her?"

Reginald Dartmouth's eyes glittered.

"You may, count," he said, simply. He wished the Italian to think him a lover of Italy, not the countess, and was careful to make no show of warmth at the mention of her name.

"Then I will find and tell her," said the count, grasping Reginald Dartmouth's hand again. "Wait for her here in the ante-chamber if we do not meet again."

And with a fervent gratitude the conspirator turned off to join his group again.

Reginald Dartmouth looked after him for a moment and then turned away with a quiet smile.

"Soh," he muttered, "I am to be a member of the council of Vitzarelli conspirators! Well, I would risk greater things than that for the beautiful Lucilla."

Punctually at the hour appointed he stood in the shadow of the portico waiting for the countess and Madame Campani.

Carriage after carriage rolled away with clatter and importance, but still she did not come; but as he had almost decided to give the adventure up, at least for that night, he saw her splendid equipage dash up, and in a few minutes felt that queer sensation at the heart which always warned him of her approach.

She came down the steps looking more beautiful than ever, flushed and sparkling with the homage of the courtiers who thronged round her, eager and anxious to be of some service in connection with her train or bouquet.

As she stepped upon the piece of crimson carpet that lined the way to the carriage he came forward and with a slight start she said:

"Senor—captain, we have been waiting. The count is—"

"Here," said that individual, coming down the steps behind them.

The countess placed her hand on his arm, and followed by Reginald Dartmouth they entered the carriage.

The count, after addressing a few words to the countess in a voice too low for Reginald Dartmouth to hear, bent forward and said:

"I have been communicating to the countess your decision to join us. She is the keystone, the centre piece of the society, and we do nothing without her consent, help and advice."

Reginald bowed.

"You are wise, my lord," he said, significantly.

The countess bent forward.

"The count tells me you will join us," she said, in a low voice that thrilled through his heart. "Are

you aware of the risk, the danger and the responsibilities that attend us?"

Reginald Dartmouth dropped his voice to attune with hers and fixed a meaning glance upon her large, dark eyes.

"For the first I know and care nothing, for the last," he said, "I am willing to undertake the heaviest you may see fit to place upon me."

"Good," she said, musically; "you speak like an Englishman, bravely. It's well, for we have need of brave and wise men. We are going rapidly to our place of meeting. I need not tell Captain Dartmouth that its existence is a secret and that we place more than our lives—our cause—in his hands when we lead him thither."

"Both are more sacred to him than his own life," responded Reginald Dartmouth, earnestly, and the lovely woman, apparently satisfied with the answers to her questions, sank back into the silken cushions.

Half an hour passed and the silence remained unbroken.

Reginald Dartmouth could see by the dim light of the street lamps as the carriage flashed passed them that the count's face was anxious and thoughtful and that the sweet one of the countess was dreamy and wistful.

His own he kept well within the shadow of the carriage.

Presently the carriage came to a stop, and the steps were let down.

The count alighted first and assisted the countess. As Reginald Dartmouth was about to follow two men stepped from out the darkness and threw a cloth of some sort over his head, fastening it with the rapidity of constant practice across his eyes so that he was in total darkness.

Before he could resent the action the countess whispered in his ear:

"It is a form merely and cannot be broken—even for you. Take my hand."

He grasped her hand eagerly with a flush of delight.

"For this," he interrupted, pressing it, "I would lose life itself."

"Hush!" she said, in a low voice.

"There are stairs," said the count, on the other side of him. "I will count—one, two, three, etc."

And he counted them as Reginald Dartmouth, still led by the small hand of the countess, ascended.

The stairs ceased, and by the sudden glow of heat Reginald Dartmouth knew that he had entered a room.

There was a dead silence for a minute or two, and then a voice said:

"Now!"

At that moment, obeying the signal, the count untied the bandage, and Reginald Dartmouth, opening his eyes, saw that he was in a large room draped with dark purple hangings and lit by a candelabra suspended from the centre of the ceiling, which he noticed—having looked at it with that instinct which moves all men when opening their eyes after a period of darkness to turn them immediately to the object of light—was fitted with an apparatus for extinguishing or rather concealing its lights at a moment's notice.

Round the room were settees of crimson velvet.

Seated on these were about twenty men or women, all in evening dress, and apparently just come, like themselves, from concert or ball room.

Most of them were Italians, but there were a few Frenchmen, a Spaniard and a Corsican.

At the end of the room stood a small tripod, upon which in a small grate burnt a bright fire such as that used by alchemists for the smelting of metals in small quantities.

Beside this stood an old oak chair elaborately carved and ornamented with a motto in Italian and a heart with a forefinger laid across it.

The door by which they had entered seemed the only means of entrance and exit to the apartment, and the captain's quick ears caught the sound of bolts and bars shot into their places at the moment his baudage was removed.

The count threw again the cloth—which was of black satin and embossed with a skull and cross-bones—and walked with stately dignity to the chair. The countess seated herself on a fauteuil placed beside it and laid her hand on its right arm.

All eyes were turned towards the count.

He rose, and in a musical voice deepened with a tone of command said:

"Brethren and sisters of the cause, I bring you, to-night, a new brother."

All eyes were turned towards the stalwart figure in the centre of the room.

Reginald Dartmouth stood the sharp scrutiny with unchanged impassibility.

"It is unnecessary to enumerate the advantages that must accrue to us from his admittance to our order, and I will say only that he is wealthy, cou-

rageous and a soldier. Am I stating correctly?" he asked, turning to Reginald Dartmouth.

He bowed in silence.

"Good," continued the count. "We want gold and valour—our new brother brings us both—nay, more he can give us, for I have spoken with him, advice and wise counsel. Brethren and sisters, shall we put him to the usual trial?"

The whole assemblage bowed in silence.

"Good," said the count, then, turning to Reginald Dartmouth, he said: "It is usual to prove the assertions of those who wish to join our order. Rules should have no exceptions. We will that there should be none in your case. If you are honourable and true you must prove yourself to be so by three tests—that of fire, of blood, and of steel. Are you willing to be so proved?"

All eyes were bent upon the neophyte and all ears were strained to catch the answer.

"I am," he said, gravely.

"It is well," said the count.

And with a solemnity that was reflected in the lovely face at his elbow and in those of the circle around him he cried:

"Bring forth the fire."

Instantly three men dressed in sombre black and wearing crape over their faces, came from behind the chair and lifted the tripod into the centre of the circle.

(To be continued.)

#### A LETTER.

TO-DAY, when my heart was sorest  
With the pang of a hope deferred,  
Your tender missive came to me  
Like a bright-winged message bird—  
Like an errand dove whose wandering wing  
To Hope's storm-beaten ark  
Bore the sweet olive-branch of peace,  
When all the world was dark.

It came when the sullen demon  
Of bitter and wild unrest  
Troubled the hidden waters  
Of life in my weary breast;  
Out of the gloom and sadness  
Of the world of winter and storm,  
And straightway heart and hearth-side  
Were summer sweet and warm.

Some subtle premonition  
Through all my being stole,  
As listlessly I pondered  
The unfamiliar scroll;  
And swift as the tropic sunrise  
Leaps from the arms of Night,  
A rushing, keen emotion thrilled  
My spirit with strange delight.

Lonesome, alone, uncared for,  
I sat in the gloom apart,  
The cross of sorrow lay on my life—  
Its shadow was in my heart,  
As I thought with yearning anguish  
Of the friends grown careless and cold,  
Of the thwarted aims, and the shipwreck  
Of the glorious dreams of old.

Ah, sweet were the olden Spring-times,  
The Springs of the years gone by,  
When our rosiest dreams reflected  
The glory of earth and sky;  
And a gleam of their vanished brightness  
Your passionate words recall,  
Though the Summers have changed to  
Autumn,  
And the shadows of Winter fall! E. A. B.

#### SCIENCE.

**NITRIC ACID IN SPRING WATER.**—The water supplied to the city of Munich contains nitric acid and saltpetre. Professor A. Wagner states that the amount of water used by the city in one year, by the ordinary water-pipes, contains saltpetre sufficient to make 18,106 cwt. of gunpowder.

**A SINGULAR FISH.**—A curious fish was caught three months ago in Chautauqua Lake, the third of the same sort captured in the lake within the past forty years. The fish is about six feet in length and when caught weighed one hundred and thirty-four pounds. There are one back and three belly fins. But the head is what is most wonderful and peculiar about the fish. The mouth opens far back and wide enough to receive a nail cask. There is a large falling lip or jaw that sets back and upward as the mouth opens. The inside of the mouth is covered with a species of coarse hair somewhat resembling the small feathers or down of an ostrich. Projecting for almost fourteen inches from the upper jaw is a sort of shovel blade made of a hard substance. This instrument would seem to be intended for throwing food into its mouth rather than for at-

tacking prey or other objects or defending itself against assault. As this fish has no teeth it is supposed that it subsists upon animalcules or other substances, floating in the water, which are drawn or forced into its mouth by the blade attached to its jaw.

**SOLAR HEAT AND VEGETABLE CARBON.**—Helmholtz says that in a piece of cultivated land producing corn or trees one may reckon per year and per square foot of land 0.036 lb. of carbon to be produced by vegetation. This is the amount of carbon which, during one year, on the surface of a square foot in our latitude, can be produced under the influence of solar rays. This quantity when used as fuel and burnt to produce carbonic acid gives so much heat that 291 lb. of water could be heated 1 deg. C. Now we know the whole quantity of solar light which comes down to one square foot of terrestrial surface during the second, or one minute, or one year. The whole amount which comes down during a year to one square foot is sufficient to raise the temperature of 430,000 lb. of water 1 deg. C. The amount which can be produced by fuel growing upon one square foot during one year is, as we see from these figures, a very small fraction of the whole amount of solar heat which can be produced by the solar rays. It is only the 1,477th part of the whole energy of solar light.

#### VESEVIUS.

ABOUT two-thirds of the way up the side of Vesuvius stands a small building, plainly visible from the Naples side of the bay. During cloudy and wet weather it is shrouded in the dense veil of smoke which settles around the summit, and in times of eruption the fiery streams seem to encompass it and flow far below its level. In this structure, thus dangerously situated, Professor Palmieri, a well-known Italian savant, has established an observatory and, with marvellous intrepidity, has remained at his post watching the convulsions of the volcano at times when his house stood between torrents of liquid fire, the heat from which cracked the windows and scorched the solid stone of the walls.

The knowledge obtained at so great a risk has been recently given to the world in an ably written volume, which contains data calculated to be of invaluable assistance in the future investigation of volcanic phenomena. Professor Palmieri considers that, to a certain extent, eruptions may be predicted, a belief which he bases upon late observations that the central crater commences the agitation, which is followed by a series of light convulsions, which terminate in the grand outbreak. This concluded, the volcano becomes again quiescent. A vivid impression of the enormous force developed during an eruption is conveyed in the fact that on April 26, 1872, the volume of smoke, ashes, lava fragments and bombs projected upwards from the crater attained the height of no less than 4,265 feet from the edge.

It is difficult to convey an adequate idea of the appearance of Vesuvius when thus convulsed. Pictures of the phenomenon invariably exaggerate it, as they depict a steady column of fire of a height equal to or greater than that of the mountain. As the latter is over 3,000 feet above the sea level in altitude, the impossibility of a fiery pillar of such proportion is obvious. Red-hot stones are occasionally, as we have above stated, thrown to greater heights; but such is by no means of common occurrence. By day an unceasing flow of white smoke rises like a gigantic plume from the crater and is visible for miles distant, while at night the base of the column becomes radiant with a lurid glare. During the height of an eruption the smoke is ejected in greater quantities, and the summit of the mountain belches fountains of flame. The latter, however, are by no means continuous. The volcano will often remain quiet for hours and sometimes days, often causing it to be believed that the convulsions are over. Then suddenly the smoke clouds will thicken, a rumbling becomes heard, and a great jet of fire rises for a short distance above the crater and instantly falls back. At the same time stones and red-hot scorice rise high in the air and add by their fall to the noise of the commotion. This goes on at varying periods, sometimes ceasing immediately and again continuing for a day or more.

There is a prevalent though mistaken idea that lava, at the time of these great outbursts, pours in rapid torrents down the declivity. In times of repose it is very seldom that the streak of light due to the red-hot mass is seen on the mountain side; though when an eruption first begins, probably after nightfall, a jagged lurid line will be remarked reaching below the crater. This extends as the convulsion progresses, and, after several weeks, it expands into several dull red streams reaching down a distance perhaps of two-thirds of the slope. The onward movement of the lava is very slow, and of course it is totally unlike the molten rivers represented in popular prints. Its surface soon cools sufficiently to permit of being walked over, though a stick thrust a few inches down becomes quickly charred.





[MRS. FLINT COMES TO THE RESCUE.]

## LITTLE SUNSHINE.

## CHAPTER III.

What need we any spur but our own cause  
To prick us to redress? *Shakespeare.*

FOR some moments Mr. and Mrs. Flint stood looking at each other without exchanging a word, and then a demoniac scowl played upon the features of the former as he said, grating his teeth savagely the while:

"Poison is cheap, my darling. Poison is very cheap and very effective too, when used with judgment."

"Yes," replied his wife, in a whisper, "and it is very dangerous too, however skilfully it may be used. I wish you wouldn't speak of anything so dreadful. It makes my flesh crawl!" and Mrs. Flint shuddered.

"There is no harm in poisoning rats, my love," said Flint, with a hideous leer—"no harm whatever. It is done every day. I was thinking of rats, my darling—only of rats—only of rats—he! he! only of rats!" and Mr. Flint rubbed his hands gleeefully.

"Well, I wish you wouldn't think of rats just now," replied Mrs. Flint, in a tone of apprehension; "or if you must think of them, I wish you would remember that there are other methods to get rid of rats besides poisoning them."

"Ah, yes, you are right, my pet," said Mr. Flint, graciously; "they may be caught in a trap, or they may be smoked out, and then their putrid carcasses do not become a nuisance. True, true—I was a little excited at first, I must own, and thought only of the most expeditious method."

"There is no need of being in a hurry," said Mrs. Flint, in a quieter tone; "we can take our time and watch our opportunity, and when it is proper and safe to strike I shall be quite as ready to strike as you are."

"You are right, love," assented Flint, "very right—and in the meantime would it not be well to pay a visit to that amiable sister of yours and see if we cannot doctor her in some way? She is too fond of talking, my darling, and for an invalid that is always hurtful. It is astonishing how some people will persist in living when they are of no use in the world. When she was down with the typhoid fever in the hospital I thought she would die most certainly. The doctor told me that there was not the slightest hope of her recovery—that the chances were a hundred to one against her—yet here she is, all alive, and trying to injure the fair fame of the only relatives she has in the world. This shows the ignorance of physicians and the unreasonableness of poor relatives. If the

doctor had possessed a grain of professional pride—if he had attached the slightest importance to his own prediction—he would have dosed her out of the world when she threatened to get well, and if she had possessed a particle of love of us, or had the slightest idea of propriety, she would not have tried to get well, but would have died like a decent Christian woman and have been buried out of sight without troubling anybody. That woman has got more lives than a cat, my darling!"

"She hangs on to life stubbornly," returned Mrs. Flint, somewhat bitterly, "there's no denying that—but I don't think she can hold out much longer. She was a wreck five years ago, and how she has lived till this time passes my comprehension. We have but little to fear from her, however. She has done all the harm she can do, but as for Miss Lily Davis—or Little Sunshine as they call her—she must be looked after. We must manage to put her sun under a cloud in some way."

While Flint and his wife were thus conversing the principal object of their hatred made her way to the work-room, singing gaily as was her wont.

She found Annie Finkle, the girl who sat next her, and who was an especial favourite with her, in tears.

"What is the matter, Annie?" she asked, in a tone of great sympathy.

"Oh, Lily," replied the girl, raising her tear-stained eyes, and gazing sorrowfully at her companion, "I am so much disappointed! I promised my little sister that she should have a pair of shoes to-night, and now Mr. Flint is about to stop two shillings out of my wages, and I shall be unable to get them, and the poor little thing needs them so much, and will be greatly grieved when she finds she is not to have them. It is a small thing to cry for perhaps, but indeed I can't help it!"

"Well, dry your tears, Annie," replied Lily Davis; "the old monster will never keep back any portion of your wages again. I think I've fixed that matter completely. He has promised me that you shall get your full wages, all of you."

"Oh, girls, do you hear that?" exclaimed Annie, smiling through her tears—"Lily says that we are to get our full wages after all."

At once the girls were anxious to know what had brought about this desirable change in affairs, whereupon Lily made them acquainted with what had transpired but a few moments before, and ended by saying:

"And so, girls, I am discharged, but I shall not desert you on that account. I shall still stand by you and see that you get your rights."

A dead silence of some moments' duration succeeded Lily's announcement. She was the idol of the shop, and the thought of her leaving fell like a cloud upon the little circle of her shopmates. At length Annie Finkle arose from her seat, and while a look of indignation shot from her large black eyes she said, in a loud voice full of deep determination:

"Girls, I don't know what the rest of you intend doing, but for my own part I won't work a single day in this shop after Lily Davis leaves it. She has stood by us, and we should be the meanest of the mean if we did not stand by her. I move that we all strike immediately!"

"Second the motion!" exclaimed half a dozen voices, in chorus, and in less than a minute every employée, in spite of all that Lily Davis could do to restrain them, had ceased working, and proceeded to organize.

Headed by Annie Finkle, they marched into the shop and ranged themselves in front of their august employer, when their leader proceeded to say:

"Mr. Flint, Lily Davis has informed us that you have discharged her, and I have been instructed by my shopmates to say that if she leave the shop we shall all leave with her."

A frown, black as midnight, settled upon old Flint's countenance as he replied:

"Go back to your work this minute, or I will send to the station-house and have every one of you arrested for attempting to ruin my business. The law will not permit you to strike at a moment's notice, and I will teach you what it is to act in this outrageous manner if you do not instantly return to your duty!"

"You cannot frighten us, Mr. Flint," replied Annie Finkle. "We have not taken this step without calm deliberation. I don't know much about the law, but I do know that this is a free country, and that working girls are not slaves, although you and such as you would like to make them so. We don't propose to argue the point with you at all. We only desire to say that if Lily Davis leaves the shop we will also leave it, and you may do your worst. And now we await your answer."

"But Miss Davis is not anxious to remain in my service," replied Flint, in a somewhat softer tone; "she made no complaint at being discharged."

"I don't suppose she did," rejoined Annie, "and I don't know whether you can even prevail upon her to remain. But if you can't then so much the worse for you, for we shall follow her."

Flint saw that expostulation would be as useless as his attempt to frighten them had been, and yet it was absolutely necessary that he should conciliate

them in some way. He had large contracts for work on hand which must be completed, and a strike at the time would be ruinous. Concealing his rage, therefore, as well as he was able, he desired one of the girls to call Lily Davis.

The call was answered promptly by Lily, when Flint said, with as much affability as he could command:

"I suppose you are not averse to remaining here, Miss Davis, if I should desire you to do so?"

"Well, I have no great desire to remain," replied Lily; "in fact I had about made up my mind that I had rather leave than not."

"But you see what trouble it will put me to if you go," rejoined Flint, in a supplicatory tone; "these silly girls are determined to strike if you leave the shop, in which case I cannot finish contracts which I have entered into, and must consequently lose heavily. You said but a short time since that the fact of my discharging you would not make you my enemy, and you certainly will not bear me so much ill will as to ruin my business."

"No, I will not," replied Lily, promptly; "the fact is, Mr. Flint, I had rather be your friend than your enemy if you will let me. I never could cherish animosity, but I cannot bear unfair dealing. We girls work hard for you—we earn every penny which we receive, and are fairly entitled to it. Use us fairly and we will be satisfied to work for you, but it may as well be clearly understood that from this time forth we will submit to nothing that is not strictly just. And now, girls," she continued, turning to her shopmates, "let us return to work."

The girls agreed to the proposal unanimously, and in a few moments the wheels in the work-room were spinning around as merrily as though no misunderstanding had occurred, while above their din could be heard the voice of Lily Davis, singing:

"I care for nobody, no, not I,  
If nobody cares for me."

Hardly had quiet been restored when Tony Tucker, the apprentice to whom allusion has before been made, came up from the cellar with a scuttleful of coal, and proceeded to replenish the fire.

"Don't put on too much coal, please, Tony," said Lily Davis, whose seat was somewhat near the stove.

"Ha! ha! You're too warm, are you?" laughed Tony, as he checked the flow of coal into the stove, placed the scuttle on the floor and closed the stove door. "You're too warm, eh? Well, I don't wonder at it. In fact I'd wonder if you wasn't. The idea of cold Sunshine would be a funny one, indeed. Besides, you've just had some very warm work with the old man."

"What a merry fellow you are, to be sure, Tony!" returned Lily, with a pleasant smile; "you've always got a joke of some sort on hand; and it's a little singular too considering what you have to put up with. It is the easiest thing in the world to be happy when we have nothing to trouble us, but one who is beaten and scolded at without reason, as you are, is entitled to great credit for not being ill-natured and disagreeable."

"Well, I don't know about that, Sunshine," replied Tony, as he picked up the poker to give the grate a raking. "I can't see that it would make me any the happier to be ill-natured and disagreeable, if I am badly used. My doctrine is to take the world as I find it, and do the best I can under the circumstances. I'd rather laugh than cry at any time, and yet I'm not always good-natured. There are times when I feel like breaking things, and there are people in the world that I'd rather pinch than kiss." Here he nodded significantly and pointed with his thumb over his shoulder towards the front shop, after which he continued: "Now if everybody was like you, Sunshine, what a world this would be! But there wouldn't be any merit in being good-natured then, because nobody could help it. I'd like to see the person who could scowl or growl in your presence, except old Flint and his wife."

"You are a born flatterer, Tony," returned Lily Davis, with a smile, "and will make a first-rate lover when you are a few years older."

"Well, I won't deny that I can talk sweet when I feel like it," replied Tony, with a grimace, "but I don't flatter you a mite. It seems to me that among womankind you are a pattern. I shan't forget in a hurry how often you've given me choice bits o' grub out of your own dinner when you knew I was hungry. Nobody but them as has got such an appetite as I have can tell what it is to get enough to eat when it is least expected. I feel sometimes as though I could just eat my way right through a pile of dead horses, and I really believe I should starve to death if I had to depend entirely upon that old sardine, Skin Flint. And I shan't forget either as long as I live how you washed the blood from my head and cut away the hair, and put a plaster on the wound when old Flint knocked me down with a poker because I didn't move

fast enough to suit him. The old tiger! I expect I shall have a fine time with him this morning, for everything has gone cross with him, and he's as savage as a hyena. He has already promised me a warning for being out last night, but he won't find it so easy to knock me down now as it was three years ago. Just as certain as he makes the attempt I'll go at him, and if I don't—!" Here Tony was too greatly excited to finish his threat, but went into a little pantomime expressive of his determination by throwing a chair which stood near him a "cross-but-tock" and standing over it with the poker upraised, "Oh, then you were out last night, were you?" returned Lily, with some surprise.

"Yea," replied Tony. "I stole out after the old man had gone to bed, and went to the theatre. It ain't in reason for a fellow to stay in the house always after he has got to be eighteen years old, and I shan't do it to please anybody. Yes, I went to the theatre and I saw *Macbeth* played. It was grand where *Macbeth* and *Macduff* has a fight. Didn't I shout out with the rest of the boys! And now when old Flint tackles me this morning I'm jist a-goin' to say to him, 'Lay on, old Flint, and if I don't go at you may I be skinned!'"

Tony Tucker did not observe that Lily Davis was trying by earnest gesticulation to direct his attention to something which was going on behind him. The boy was so absorbed by the thoughts to which he was giving expression that he did not observe her kindly efforts to warn him of impending danger, and before he was aware that old Flint was in his neighbourhood that irate individual, who had been creeping slyly up behind him, and had heard every word which he had uttered, seized him firmly by the collar, and winking aloft a stout stick, cried out: "You will say 'Lay on, old Flint' will you? And you will 'go at me,' will you? Well, let's see you!"

But before he could bring the weapon down the boy was upon him. Turning with the agility as well as the ferocity of a wildcat, he struck as he clutched his master by the throat:

"Yes, I will go at you, you paddin'-headed old Skin Flint! Do you s'pose I'm goin' to let you thrash me all my life? Not if I knows it!"

So sudden was the attack, and so unprepared for it was old Flint, that he was thrown to the floor before he could help himself, and the boy was on top of him, showering blows thick and fast, and bringing the blood with every stroke.

"Ah, you villain!" howled Flint, in an agony of rage. "Let me up! How dare you strike me? I will murder you when I get up!"

"I've no doubt you will if you can!" rejoined the boy, as he still continued to play a lively tune with both fists upon his master's face; "but I'll do a little murdering before you get up! I'll have that satisfaction anyhow!"

"Let me up, you scoundrel!" groaned old Flint as he struggled desperately, but without effect, to free himself from the enraged apprentice. "Let me up! Murder! Will no one help me? Will you all see me beaten to death before your very faces? Murder! Murder!"

It is hard to say what would have been the fate of Flint had not his cries penetrated to the front shop and alarmed his life partner, for the girls were all apparently paralyzed with fear, and sat gazing with horror on the scene.

Mrs. Flint, as she entered the room, took in the situation at a glance, and, seizing a heavy hammer which lay on a work-bench near, she rushed toward Tony like an enraged tigress, and would undoubtedly have brained him had not Lily Davis, who discovered the boy's danger, shrieked out:

"Tony! Tony! Jump up, or you will be killed!"

But Tony heeded not the warning. His blood was up. He was too intent on punishing his persecutor, and the hammer would certainly have fractured his skull had not a new actor appeared on the scene.

As Mrs. Flint dashed through the door to the relief of her husband she was followed by an individual who had just entered the shop, and whose ears had also caught the cry of "Murder!"

He was a square-built, close-knit, burly man, in the garb of a carman. His age was about twenty-five and he had the appearance of a reckless, good-natured rough diamond.

Springing forward, he caught the formidable weapon just as it was descending upon Tony's head, driven with all this force which the enraged Mrs. Flint could muster.

"No, you don't!" he exclaimed, as he twisted the hammer from the grasp of the enraged woman, and then held her as tightly as though she were in a vice—"no, you don't! Fair play is a jewel. The boy ain't got nothin' but his hands to work with, and I baw the hammer. If the old buffer's down, that's his fault, and he ought to take the consequences, for he's twice as big as the boy, and should have kept on to

his pins. Besides, I know he's in the wrong. He's allers in the wrong. I don't take Tony's part because he's my brother, but because I know he's right. Tony wouldn't tackle anybody unless they crowded on him, and when a boy's crowded on he ought to protect himself if he can. The worst day's work our old dad did was to apprentice Tony to him, for he's led the boy's dog's life, and I didn't think he had pluck enough to resist."

While the new comer was delivering this harangue the boy Tony kept up his attack, and his enraged master continued to roar like a wild bull.

"Will nobody pull this young murderer off?" he shouted, in agony; "am I to be murdered in cold blood?"

"Not by no means," returned the carman, coolly; "you ain't to be murdered in cold blood. Tony couldn't kill you with his fists if he should try, and nobody ain't a goin' to pull him off not till you sing out enough, unless he's got a licence to lick Mat Tucker, and you don't pick them fellows up every day!"

"Murder-r-r-r!" roared Flint, with all the power of his lungs, struggling violently the while to free himself.

"Sing out enough!" responded the carman, "and I'll take the boy off, and I won't take him off till you do. He ain't got no chance with you in a fair stand-up fight, and while he's got the best of you I'm a-goin' to let him keep it!"

Finishing his efforts to extricate himself safely, the badly punished Flint thought it the part of discretion to cry "Enough!" but he did it so unwillingly and in so low a tone that the carman was not satisfied.

"Say it louder," he said, "so that all hands can hear it! Say it as if you meant it!"

"Enough!" screamed Flint, savagely, and then Mat Tucker let go his hold of Mrs. Flint, and pulled Tony off his prostrate enemy.

Having regained his feet, Flint, with a demoniac scowl, stooped down to pick up the hammer which the carman had caused Mrs. Flint to drop. His intention was divined by him instantly, however, and, kicking the weapon out of his reach, Mat Tucker caught the proprietor of the shop by the collar of his coat, and, holding him firmly, said:

"Look here, old man, I don't want to hurt you, for you're old enough to be my father. You ain't fair game for me, but I think it's about a square thing between you and Tony, and you ain't a-going to play anything foul on to him. You've been a-crowding on the boy ever since he was bound apprentice to you. You haven't used him half so well as I use my bull-dog, and it's time the thing was stopped. I told him no longer ago than yesterday that he must go at you if you ever attempted to strike him again, and I'd bear him out in it. You had pretty nigh loked the life out of him, and I didn't much think he'd have the pluck to tackle you, but it seems he has done it and licked you too, and I glory in him for it. Tony's a good boy if he's used only half right, and it's a monstrous shame he should be used worse than a convict. I'll leave it to anybody that knows Tony whether he ain't a good boy. Girls," he continued, raising his voice and looking around at the operatives, "ain't Tony a good boy?"

"Yas!" shouted all the girls, in a chorus, and the sprightly Jennie Brown, not satisfied with giving a simple affirmative response, arose from her seat, approached the ground, and said, emphatically:

"Yes, he is a good boy. If he ain't then there never was one. I don't know how often he has seen me home through a storm. I've known him to give his last penny to a beggar, and I have known him to fight a whole crowd of boys for insulting a poor old applewoman. A good boy! I should think he was indeed! Tony has been abused shamefully, and it's too bad. If I had been a man somebody I know of would have been severely handled before now." Then turning to Tony she continued, "You did just right, Tony, and I like you all the better for it, and if old Flint ever lays the weight of his hand on you again I'll scratch his eyes out, so there now!" and throwing a look of great severity on the discomfited Flint, Miss Brown swept away to her seat again and set her machine in motion.

"Oh, Mat!" exclaimed Tony, with a deep-drawn sigh, as he looked first at his brother and then at his feminine defender; "ain't she game? Oh, Brownie! Brownie!" he continued, in a sort of rapt ecstacy, "if I was only a few years older, and didn't owe anybody anything, and had a pound in my pocket, and credit at the corner grocery, wouldn't I make up to you? Wouldn't I? But that's all poetry, that is!" and, heaving another sigh, he stood gazing upon "Brownie," as though he would like to eat her.

"Now, you see, old man," said Mat Tucker, turning to Flint. "I've opened court here and the testimony's all agin you. There ain't one of the witnesses but what is willing to swear you are in the wrong, and so you had better cry pecora and heal



in your horns. You are one of them old sardines that thinks the world was made expressly for you, and that nobody else has a right in it. You are rich, and all your money has been wrung out of these poor gals, and such as these, and if you could you'd coin money out of their hearts' blood. You've got the form of a man but the heart of a wolf. You're as cunning as a snake and just as cowardly. I am poor, and I have to work about as hard as the horse I drive, and I've got an old father and mother and three little brothers to take care of, but I wouldn't stand in your boots for all the money on top of the round earth. I'm happier than you can ever hope to be, and so is every one of these poor gals. You're a miserable old scoundrel, and ought to be skinned alive first, and then hung, drawn, and quartered afterwards. But I won't be hard on you. The court will be merciful. The sentence of the court is that from this time you pay particular attention to your own business, and treat every one who works for you as if they were human beings instead of beasts, and if you fail to do this the judgment of the court is that you ought to have another good sound pommeling administered in a superior style."

"Oh, what a splendid judge you are, sir," exclaimed Miss Brown, in a tone of great admiration. "When the judgment of the court is carried out I hope I shan't be away at dinner."

"Silence in the court!" shouted Mat Tucker, in a tone of well-affected gravity, and then turning to Flint, he continued: "What has the prisoner to say to the sentence of the court?"

"You will find out what the prisoner has to say to the sentence of the court when I get you and your precious brother in court," snarled Flint, spitefully. "I will have you both arrested this very day, and if I don't have you in prison before you're a week older then it will be because I have not got determination enough, and patience enough, and money enough, too, if any be needed, to accomplish it. I will teach you beggars what it is to lay violent hands upon your superiors."

"Yes; but before you get out a warrant for our arrest," put in Tony Tucker, "it may be as well for you to remember that when a boy has his ear agin a key-hole he's very likely to hear what's said inside. I heard every word of the conversation between you and your old woman about the society, and I've got a lively memory for such things. I shan't forget a word of it, and after you've made your charge agin me I'll tell my story to the court, and as there's always a newspaper reporter on hand the probability is it'll make a good story for the papers."

"Yes, and if anything is needed to finish the story," interposed Lily Davis. "I have a few items which will probably be of use."

"You needn't think to frighten me from my purpose by any tissue of falsehoods which you may invent," snarled Flint.

But even while he spoke the commonest observer could have seen that Flint was thoroughly alarmed and would not dare to carry out his threat.

"Well, I shan't run away, old man," said Mat Tucker, carelessly. "When you get out the warrant for my arrest tell the officer he'll always find me either at home or at work, and I shall always be happy to accompany him wherever he may think proper. But, by thunder, there's been such a lively time here I almost forgot what I came for. The fact is there's going to be a sort of family gathering at our house to-night and I called to see if Tony wouldn't be allowed to join us. It ain't often we ask the favour, and you will let him go, of course? You couldn't do less, you know, when you're going to lock him up to-morrow."

"You are the most impudent vagabond I ever saw in my life," exclaimed old Flint, foaming with anger; "and if you do not leave these premises instantly I'll see if I cannot find a policeman to remove you."

"Oh, you needn't trouble yourself to look for a policeman," returned Mat, with perfect coolness. "I'll find one on my way home, and send him to you if you say so. But you'll let Tony come, won't you?"

"No!" roared Flint. "Get out!"

"Well, good-bye," said Mat, with well-affected gravity; "and if I don't see you again before I'm arrested perhaps you'll be so obliging as to write, because I shall be anxious to hear from you. But I know you'll let Tony come to-night. I think you'll alter your mind after I'm gone. Good-bye. Oh, I say, Flinty, a raw oyster would be good for that eye to-night, and to-morrow you can wash it with a little sugar-of-lead—not too strong, or you might burn the skin. Another good way is to have it leached. That's best. Then to-morrow have it painted with flesh-coloured paint, and it'll hardly show at all. I've done 'em that way many a time. As for your other bruises they don't amount to much. Tony had to strike short-armed, or you'd have had a healthy old face on you. Tony's a pretty good jobber, but the

boy don't understand his business yet. He ain't had practice enough. If ever I undertake to trounce you, you'll see the difference. Why, if ever I'd had the chance at you that Tony had there wouldn't be any shape to that old head of yours for a fortnight, at least. But the boy did the best he could, and we mustn't blame him. Good-bye, old buffer. You'll let Tony come to-night, I know you will."

And Mat Tucker took his departure with a pleasant grimace, while Mr. Flint grated his teeth with rage and felt that it would be the most delightful task in the world to hang the carman.

But Mr. Flint had to smother his wrath notwithstanding. Visions of daffy papers containing disclosures to his detriment floated before him.

After lecturing Tony for an hour on the enormity of his offence, and assuring him that five years in prison would be the very least punishment which he might expect, he suddenly altered his tone, and wound up by saying:

"But perhaps it's my duty as a Christian to forgive you. I can't hold malice. It ain't in me, and although you have committed a crime which should cause you to mourn in sackcloth and ashes, yet my religion teaches me that I should heap coals of fire upon your head by an act of kindness. You may visit your family to-night, and while you are enjoying yourself with your relatives I hope you will not fail to remember my leniency with tears of contrition."

So Mat Tucker was right after all when he said that Mr. Flint would alter his mind and let Tony go home on a furlough.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Let me wing your heart, for so I shall  
If it be made of penetrable stuff.

Shakespeare.

ABOUT a week after the incidents narrated in the last chapter an event occurred which had well nigh finished the career of Lily Davis. She was about crossing a street, when a pair of spirited horses, driven by a coachman in livery, became unmanageable, dashed suddenly around the corner, and before the sewing-girl could get out of the way the pole of the carriage struck her on the shoulder and threw her down. At the same instant a policeman standing near seized the frightened animals and brought them to a standstill, while an apple-woman on the footway—a brawny, powerfully built creature—caught Lily up as though she had been an infant, and bore her to the steps of a mansion, where she gently seated her.

A gaily dressed lady, with a proud, arrogant cast of features, occupied the carriage, and protruding her head through the window, she exclaimed, and graily:

"Go on, William! What are you stopping for? These beggars are always getting in the way and deserve to be run over. Don't stop, I say, but go on. I have overstayed my time, and shall be too late for dinner as it is!"

"I can't go on, ma'am," replied the coachman. "Sure, a p'eceman has no horses by the head."

"And what right has a policeman to interfere with my horses?" demanded the grand lady, angrily—"he had better let go the reins and allow us to proceed on our way if he knows what's best for himself!"

"Excuse me, madam," replied the policeman, after having quieted the horses, "but I cannot allow you to go on till I have your address. Your horses have knocked down a poor girl. She may be badly injured, and it is my duty to ascertain the name of the party who is responsible for her hurts."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the lady, with a sneer; "and I should like to know what right you have to hold me responsible. The horses were restive and became unmanageable, and if a beggar got under their feet how am I to blame for that? A pretty state of things, indeed! However, I have no time to bandy words with you. If you insist on having my address, of course I must give it; but I will make you pay dearly for interfering with me. My name is Mrs. Moreland, and my address is on this card."

"All right, madam," returned the policeman, with great self-possession; "I will risk the chance of being made to pay dearly for doing my duty. Having secured your address, you are at liberty to proceed. Drive on, coachman."

The horses bounded forward at the touch of the coachman's whip, and then the policeman advanced toward Lily to see what injury she had sustained.

The apple-woman whose sympathies had been so warmly enlisted for the poor girl left her charge on the door-step the moment she heard the grand lady in the carriage give her name, and rushing to the carriage door gazed eagerly in at the occupant of the vehicle.

Her scrutiny lasted for but a moment, for the carriage was driven rapidly away; but brief as was

the look which she fixed upon Mrs. Moreland it was enough to excite her terribly.

"It is her!" she exclaimed, while her eyes blazed with anger and her lips twitched nervously—"It is her! It is her! It is her! After all these long years of searching I have found her at last! Ha! ha! ha! I have found her! I have found her! Oh, how her proud heart would quake if she knew I was so near her! And well it might, for I will wring that heart as it was never wrung before! I shan't forget the name which she gave, and ere she is many days older she will have a visitor before whom she will tremble with fear! Yes, this grand lady—this proud, pompous dame, will shake with fear in the presence of a being as humble as I am! Yes, the great Mrs. Moreland will cringe and crawl like a whipped spaniel before a low-bred, vulgar apple-woman. She will! She will! Oh, how sweet it will be to humble her!" Then suddenly recollecting the poor girl to whose assistance she had done, she continued, "But let me look after the unfortunate young thing who my grand lady was so willing to ride over. The beggar, as she called her. Ah, she will be happy to change places with that working girl ere long, or I shall be deceived."

She advanced toward Lily to lend a helping hand, but the girl had already been assisted to her feet by the policeman, and although deathly pale it was more from fright than from any physical injury.

"How are you feeling, my child?" added the old woman, in a tone of sympathy. "Are you badly hurt?"

"I think not," responded Lily, in whose cheeks the blood began slowly to return. "I am more frightened than hurt I imagine. I don't think I have sustained any serious injury. It was a severe shock—that's all!"

"Shall I assist you home, miss?" asked the policeman, kindly.

"No, I thank you!" responded the girl. "I am quite able to walk, and shall go on to my work. I was stunned, that is all, and shall be quite well again in a few moments."

"I hope so," returned the policeman; "but should your hurts prove more serious than you imagine, the grand lady who has just left us should at least pay your doctor's bill. Should you need me as a witness my name is John Darrow, and you can always find me by inquiring at the station house fender."

"Thank you, sir," answered Lily, "but I don't think I shall trouble the lady." And then, thanking the apple-woman, she was about to proceed on her way when the latter stopped her, and peering eagerly in her face, asked, excitedly:

"What is your name, young woman?"

"Lily Davis," was the quiet reply.

"I knew it! I could have sworn it!" ejaculated the old woman, while her eyes blazed, and every limb quivered with the intensity of her feelings. "Spirit of the sainted dead, are you looking at me now, and will you assist me in my task? To think that I should have met not only her but you to-day! Oh, if she knew it! If she knew it! If she knew it! Great Heaven, assist me!"

"Of what are you talking?" asked Lily, who began to think that the old woman was slightly deranged. "You don't know me surely, for I have no recollection of ever having seen you before!"

"True enough! True enough! True enough!" muttered the old woman, sadly. "I am a silly old creature, and sometimes talk nonsense to myself! Don't mind me, my child! Don't mind me! But come—a crowd is gathering—let us go on. I will go with you to your place of business."

"It is not necessary," replied Lily. "I feel as well as ever, and am not at all hurt. I can get along very well by myself."

"Yes, yes!" rejoined the old woman, with a grimace, "but, my dear, I have a purpose of my own to serve in wishing to go with you. I wish to sell my apples, and perhaps your shop-mates will buy some. Besides, I tell fortunes occasionally, for which I charge very little, and to those who cannot afford to pay I give my service for nothing. I have tried to do what I could for you, and it is only fair that you should aid me if you can, on the principle that 'one good turn deserves another.'"

"Certainly," replied Lily, readily. "I am a thousand times obliged for your kindness, and if I can aid you in any way I shall be only too happy to do it."

Accordingly they walked along together, and by the time they had reached the shop Lily was entirely restored and in the best of spirits. In truth she had been more frightened than hurt, and with the exception of a bruise or two hardly worth mentioning, she was unscathed.

"Here we are, my good woman," said Lily. "Come in and sell what you can. By the way," she added, "what is your name? I ought to know it since you have befriended me."

"Call me Sutton," exclaimed the old woman. "Mrs. Sutton. I am a widow, and a hard-working woman, and I think passably honest as the world goes."

"I have no doubt of that," replied Lily. "Your face belies you, if you are not honest."

"Thank you, my dear, for the compliment," returned the old woman, "but I have lived long enough to know that the countenance is not always an index of the character."

(To be continued.)

## MARRIED IN MASK.

### CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Timothy Robust imagined he was unseen he would thrust out one foot, then the other, and dance. Then he would walk discreetly until he had passed the fancied shadow of some policeman after which he would run and skip, skip, skip, so like the clumsy efforts of an elephant at the same practice that the little children would titter from their lurking-places, and sometimes they would stuff every available article about them into their bosoms, and at a safe distance imitate him, to the delight of their comrades.

One moonlight night he chanced to look behind him, and, to his chagrin, beheld three ragged boys skipping, skipping after him. He subsided at once, and walked with dignity away.

But no number of discouraging annoyances like these would deter him from performing as he walked the streets at night. Hope was in these efforts, and he continued them upon all occasions of fancied solitude.

Between his moderate diet and his incessant exercise the mass of flesh at the waist subsided a little.

These evidences of depletion filled him with joy. It was possible that he might in time reduce himself to the beloved Angelina's maximum.

So, as the weeks and months fled by, he exercised at night after his business hours, and in some quarter of the city, in starry night or pattering rain, could always be found "The Sportive Elephant" practising his antics.

Only upon one occasion had his skipping been the cause of real inconvenience.

That misfortune occurred upon a dark night, when a bull-dog, stretched upon the steps of a dwelling, was unable to interpret the extraordinary motions of the skipper, and, mistaking them for hostile demonstrations, started in pursuit of Timothy and secured a bite.

It chanced that one rainy night Timothy Robust, as he danced and skipped, witnessed an occurrence which aroused his suspicion of foul play. He had paused to rest and stood in the rain with uncovered head, wiping the perspiration from his brow. He saw below the level of the street in the darkness a man bearing a dark lantern with which he lighted his way up the street.

The light from the "bull's eye" of this suspicious form of lantern did not happen to be turned upon the motionless form of the lumber dealer, so that the man passed him by. But just as the stranger passed he turned the light full upon himself in the effort to examine something which he carried in his left hand. Thus for a moment was the lantern bearer's countenance plainly revealed to Timothy.

It was a peculiar face, and in the lumber dealer's judgment a bad one. He immediately associated the idea of crime with that countenance, and the face photographed itself upon his brain so that he could never forget it.

The man had paused near to Timothy, and seemed to be utterly unconscious that he stood so close to a spectator. It was plain to be seen that the object in his hand which he was inspecting so carefully was a fork with two prongs.

The light from the "bull's eye" flooding upon the breast of the lantern bearer also revealed something which filled Timothy with horror. His shirt bosom was stained with blood.

The man passed away without seeing him, and the lumber dealer hurried on in the rain, feeling confident that some tragedy had occurred in the neighbourhood.

Two days after he observed in a newspaper that a woman, familiarly known as Red Eyed Mag, had been found murdered on the floor of a shanty with two wounds upon her neck, as if from some slender and sharp-pointed dagger. He noticed that the locality described was exactly where he had paused in the rain and seen the lantern bearer.

"That man was surely the murderer," he said to himself, "and the deed was done with that fork."

But Timothy Robust was thoroughly familiar with the hardships that are entailed upon all honest men

in the metropolis who are so unfortunate as to be witnesses of a crime. So he held his peace, heard the matter speculated upon, and congratulated himself that no one knew that he had looked upon the murderer's face and evidences of guilt.

The matter soon ceased to occupy the public attention, and his secret remained in his own breast. Still he often reflected upon the subject, and cherished certain intentions of stepping forward and giving in his evidence if the matter should ever be brought to trial in the criminal court, and the identification of the lantern bearer's countenance should prove to be the important point in the case.

But the weeks and months passed and no farther agitation of that murder arose in the public press. He supposed the matter was so mysterious that the officers of the law had abandoned the pursuit of suspicious persons, and that the affair would never come to light.

Had the matter been left to the sagacity and fidelity of the police his supposition would have been correct. But a keener eye and a more unflinching zeal were upon the track of Red Eyed Mag's murderer than belonged to any member of the detective force. A brother of this woman, who had manifested no affection for her while in life, was seized with violent brotherly resentment when the woman had been sent untimely to her grave.

He had amassed a comfortable fortune in dealing out over his bar the inflammatory stimulants which are such wonderful auxiliaries to crime, and had ruined enough young men and qualified them for the gallows to satisfy the ambition of any single religionist, and he was a religionist in good standing in his church; but when his associates bandied about the words "your sister" he thought it was high time that fraternal indignation and zeal should put themselves in harness. So being shrewd as well as wealthy he wasted no breath upon the metropolitan police, but employed the best man that could be had to ferret out the murderer or murderers.

The man of infinite devices and transcendent coolness came in response to the summons, and was made cognizant of the meagre facts that the brother possessed.

It was a matter of self-congratulation to the private detective that his new task lay in the same direction, apparently, as two other tasks which had been assigned to him by two other individuals.

At the instigation of Mr. Truelove he had struck a clue which led directly to the shanty now so familiar to all. He had come rapidly and keenly there in the hunt for the lost child, and success had been almost within his grasp. But the flight of Sam had baffled his plan, for he could no more put eyes upon the boy.

Had the lad carried off Beattie? Probably not. He was but a boy and would not belike to burden himself with the care of a little girl. But Sam was linked in with all these people, these disreputable people, and wherever they were to be found the boy would be likely to be in communication with them. So the keen eyes of the detective must be ever ready to recognize Sam, for he would be a link in the chain.

He knew of nothing that could estrange the boy from his late associates. Doubtless an adult or adults of the gang had murdered the woman and the boy knew something about it.

So much for the murder.

Doubtless the boy knew, also, what disposition the gang had made of the little girl.

So much for the abduction.

And now came in the third and most affluent employer with his problem. What had become of the golden chain and harp?

Fryor had received from Mr. Truelove an accurate description of the present to Beattie, and it accorded so remarkably with the description Nicholas Rudd had given him of the chair and harp of Sophy memory that he could not divest himself of the conviction that the little lost girl was wearing about her neck the ancient piece of jewellery which the woman had given to the outcast boy in his hour of dire distress. So much for the chain and harp.

The detective had three employers. Would he satisfy either of them?

### CHAPTER X.

WHEN Sam left the house of Nicholas Rudd and made his appearance in the street he saw a policeman running along the pavement and holding his ears with his hands. The officer was trying to keep from freezing. The thermometer had fallen rapidly after night set in, and by the hour the boy had made his remarkable exit from the place the cold was intolerable. The moon was brilliant in her silver beauty, and the stars glistened with unwonted fire, but the window panes were white with frost, and an

icy wind swept down the street, which rendered locomotion necessary to preserve life.

To the policeman who was warmly clad there was a terror in the piercing blast. What then was the sensation to the lad in his ragged garments, and with no overcoat or mittens to protect him? Half exhausted by hunger, and apprehensive of the effect of the fierce blast upon the two little ones who were waiting for him under the wharf in their two days' famine, he hurried on. He exulted in the thought that money was in his pocket ample for their present wants. But would they live to enjoy the bounty of the banker? As he ran he muttered to himself:

"I hope they is alive! How they'll laugh when they see somethin' to eat. Baby is cryin', and Pup is talkin' to her to keep her spirits up this very minute, I know."

Away, away, with his feet winged by love, ran the boy, and fiercer whistled the blast in his face, and more benumbed grew his cheeks and chin and bare fingers. Policemen whom he had passed on the way paid no heed to his flying steps. They too were running to keep up circulation in their limbs, and were more apprehensive of the monster Frost than the monster Theft.

Up the avenues and along the intersecting streets he hastened, determined to seize the first opportunity to purchase food for Beattie and Pup. But it was very late, and he found no place open. Nevertheless he held on his way, knowing that one public-house near the wharf was always open all night.

As he came out from the shadow of the houses at length into the open space which rang along the river he saw that he was near a great lumber yard, piled full of timber, planks and shingles, and just beyond he saw masts and spars traced against the sky. To his joy he saw, by the light of a street lamp, the well-remembered sign which indicated that there was good cheer within for any one holding the talismanic key—cash.

He entered the place and found a party of drunken sailors "making a night of it." They were drinking, singing and dancing. He knew full well that he would not be welcomed to a seat near the fire by the landlord unless he produced some other voucher for his respectability than his tattered garments. So he immediately exposed a crown piece, and asked for a loaf of bread with oysters to the full extent of the money.

"Do you expect to eat that many yourself?" inquired the barman, with a laugh.

"No, I don't," said Sam; "they're for three."

"Why," exclaimed the barman, "you're flush to-night."

Sam made no response, but walked to the splendid coal fire, which seemed to him a Paradise in itself. He covered down over it, and warmed his benumbed limbs. It seemed to him the coldest night he had ever known. The frolic and the dance of the mariners continued. They were free from care, while the heart of the boy was full of anxiety.

"How she and Pup will laugh and jump up when they see them oysters!" ran his thought. "How I wish I could take that coal stove to 'em!"

Just at this instant the outside door was flung open, and a sailor entered.

"Great Cessars!" he said. "How cold it is! The worst night I ever knew, man or boy. Give me a place at the fire, youngster. Why, you little rascal, you like the coals, don't you? Just come in?"

"Just this minute," said Sam.

"Well, shove along a little, my lad, and divide with me."

The boy moved his seat, and the sailor sat down beside him, after calling for some grog to take the chills out of him.

"Have a glass, youngster," he said. "I'll pay for it, and it'll keep the wind out of the holes in your jacket."

"Thank'ee, sir, I niver drinks lickin'," responded Sam to this invitation.

The former juvenile barkeeper of Red Eyed Mag's shanty had never been persuaded into drinking rum or spirits of any kind.

"All right!" said the mariner. "It's a good thing to leave alone when you kin. I'd have been first mate by this time if I'd knocked off grog."

Sam made no response to this self-condemnation of the sailor. He was too anxious about his little family under the wharf to encourage conversation. Presently the mariner joined the revellers at the bar. The boy, now thoroughly warmed by the glowing coals, was ever and anon turning around to see what occasioned such extraordinary delay in the preparation of his oysters. At last they came to him.

Sam took them and passed out rapidly into the freezing night. He ran along once more in the icy gale and was passing the before-mentioned lumberyard when his attention was arrested by a rattling sound near him. He turned and beheld a familiar face. It proved to be one of the denizens of the



cave where he and Bessie had received hospitality after their flight from the shanty.

"Why, Bill," he said, remembering the name of the little thief who had stolen the bananas for Bessie, "what are ye doin' in that pile of oyster-shells?"

"Tryin' to find somethin' to eat," was the response of the boy, who at that moment espied an oyster-shell to which a tiny fragment of the late oyster clung, and which he devoured ravenously. Another and another shell he munched at with the same tiger-like ferocity, showing plainly enough that he was half-dead with hunger.

"Come here," said the sympathetic Sam. "I've got somethin' good 't eat."

The pile of shells crunched under the feet of the starving boy as he heard the angelic summons. He came to Sam, and received a few of the oysters and a piece of bread, which he bolted like a dog.

"Thank 'ee, Sam," he said, humbly, still looking at the loaf.

His look was appreciated and instantly answered. "I'd give ye more, Bill, if it wasn't for me family. But I don't forget what ye done for me and me little sister. Here's a shilling for ye. Go inter that house and feed yerself."

The grateful Bill grasped the shilling as if it was the reins of empire. Sam saw that he was shivering from head to foot.

"What's become of the little feller what wore the man's hat and kept a-makin' rhymes?" continued the loaf carrier and banker of the occasion.

Bill began to cry.

"Come here, Sam," he said, piteously. "He's jost over here in the lumber-yard. I want yer to see him a-lyin' there."

He led the way to a broken board in a high fence which enclosed the huge piles of lumber, and passed through the aperture sidewise, Sam following in the same style. A few feet inside the fence, and under the sort of roof which some of the planks made as they leaned against a pile of timber, the moonlight streamed with wonderful brilliancy, and the leader pointed out the object of their search.

There lay the little poet-thief, with his hat fallen away from him, and with his face upturned to the cold moon. Sam saw at once that he was dead—frozen to death. The sobs of Bill would have told the truth; but the suggestion of sleep for an instant attached to the serenity of the little face. The fidelity of his comrade was apparent in the little pile of oyster-shells with fragments of the oysters sticking to them which Bill had brought in through the fence and placed near to his hand.

"He couldn't eat 'em," said Bill. "But he tried hard."

"Didn't he say nothin'?" inquired Sam.

"Yes. He said he was gittin' warmer. And he said as how he'd seen his mother. But I knowed he didn't, 'cause she died in the hospital more'n three years ago."

As Sam knelt and studied the placid face of the little sleeper, who would never be hungry again, his comrade said:

"He was a good little feller, and he allers give me half his grub."

Then he commenced crying. But Sam was wondering if the poet-thief had indeed seen his dead mother in the air.

At length he turned to the shivering Bill, and bade him go and eat at the shop.

"Hurry back," he said, "and I'll watch till ye come."

The boy edged his way through the hole in the fence and ran off. Sam, shivering in the cold, arose to his feet and paced up and down before the dead. He settled in his mind what disposition he should make of the frozen corpse. Then he fell into meditation upon the children who were waiting for his return. He had promised to get them food or die in the attempt. A singular termination had come to his "first-class" burglary. He had gone in like a tiger and come out like a lamb. Kindness, generosity, magnanimity had touched the right chord in him. He was thrilled by the greatness of Nicholas Rudd. The barrier of prejudice was broken down. The rich, then, were not all natural enemies of the poor. The two ranks were not born absolutely apart, as he had supposed. They interchanged conditions sometimes. The poor boy might become rich and sit in velvet chairs, and eat off of fine china. And this great result could be effected without violence and without the use of a pistol and the bludgeon. How strange! That great man who had held out the hand of kindness and pardon had been a poor, suffering boy like himself. A poor boy, hungry and desperate! How well he remembered the words.

"Because you are a boy, and I was once a boy, and my heart was desperate, and I was hungry like you."

What an awakening to the reality had Sam experienced. His ideas, gleaned from the bitter mutter-

ings and curses of thieves, had been all wrong then. His heart had been nerved against enemies, and yet when he met them in his own person and in the deadliest attitude, pistol in hand, he found they were friends after all. What a revulsion of feeling! What an awakening! What a surprise! The generous instincts born in him, and so long chilled in the bud, burst into flowers the moment warmth touched them. His heart was quick like his spring. He went nervously and impulsively to his work, when the crisis came, in his dangerous profession. So did his heart move when Nicholas Rudd's magnanimity touched the hidden spring. Strange oversight of men when they deal with fierce and fearless boys not to see the heroic and sublime latent in them. A generous, grand word, a simple manifestation of trust goes often farther with boys than lashes and prisons.

But in Sam, as his birthright and as a natural part of his organization, lived ambition. He had been zealous to excel in the sphere in which fate had placed him. His education among thieves had confirmed his aspirations to that which he believed he was fitted for and beyond which he supposed there was no passing. But now a way was pointed out and a shining example set before him of a rise from poverty, of an exaltation to be gained without force and by the use of natural faculties and industry. The rich were not all born rich. He, a poor, hungry boy, might be rich too. He might leap the boundary and land among the class which had always seemed so far above him and so comfortable.

Across the great, black gulf which seemed to divide the shanty from the palace he saw a shining staircase leading up, up to the beautiful. And this staircase had been pointed out by a poor, desperate, hungry boy like himself, who had mounted it and triumphed.

"I was once a boy and I was desperate and hungry like you."

How every word of the man he had gone to rob, perhaps to murder, now stood out in letters of fire upon the tablet of his brain.

"I will give you a chance to work your way up from a poor boy to success just as I did. Will you work steadily?"

What more than a chance had Sam ever wanted to gain anything which seemed to his uneducated mind to be desirable? When he was hungry all he desired was the chance to snatch food when eyes were turned away. When Bessie needed shoes and a dress all he desired was the chance to put his hands unseen upon those necessities. And now, when the splendid rich man announced to him the possibility of wealth and his determination to give him a chance to acquire it, what more did he want?

"Nothin'," answered Sam to this mental interrogatory. "Nothin' but the chance to overtake that other little feller what was hungry and desperate."

How his thoughts twinkled now like stars amid the dark night which had been innate to him. How grand is the awakening to a noble ambition of one who has only known the ignoble ambition! How warm his young heart was in that freezing night beside the frozen dead toward the majestic enemy turned into a friend who had been kind to him—a robber. Ayl more, who had lifted up before him so bright a beacon to fight toward and attain. For with this orphan boy to fight was to attain. A singular and novel softening process was going on in his heart. He longed to do Nicholas Rudd some great service for his kindness. The emotion was the same that had filled the heart of the great banker for so many years regarding his benefactress, Sophy.

The plastic heart of a boy takes deep the impression of kindness. The service rendered then is never forgotten in the years of maturity by the true boy. So now did Sam lay deep in his young heart the foundation of the monument, gratitude. Then he paused and looked at the frozen face on the earth, flooded with the glory of the winter moon.

"Poor little feller!" he said. "If this great man had seen you, you wud niver have been lyin' there froze to death with nothin' but oyster-shells a-lyin' around ye. Hark! what is that?"

A thundering knock, followed by another, came upon the fence of the lumber yard. Then a voice:

"Who is it prowlin' around the yard? Come out of that! Do ye moind what I'm tellin' ye?"

Sam paused in his walk, which he had resumed, and listened, without making any response. He was aware that it is not always desirable to respond when only a surmise exists as to one's presence.

"If he thinks I'm here, let him climb the fence and make sure," he said to himself.

Again came the heavy rap of a staff upon the high fence, followed by the same sturdy voice:

"Come out o' that!"

Sam made no response.

"Bad luck to ye!" exclaimed the voice again. "I've got yer mate be the nap of his nicks, and ye had better expose your phiz moity quick or it'll go hard wid ye when I git ye to the station-house!"

"Oh, Sam! answer him," exclaimed the voice of little Bill, "and tell him what's the trouble."

At this voice Sam knew that his presence in the lumber yard was something more to the policeman than a surmise, so he went to the hole in the fence, thrust out his head and saw the officer holding little Bill in the moonlight.

"I didn't holler out," he said, apologetically, "cause there's death in here."

"Then this boy spake the truth, did he? He told me as a little chap lay froze to death in there."

"Yes, he's a-lyin' here dead," said Sam. "Do come and carry him to the station."

"Heaven be merciful to him!" exclaimed Dennis O'Toole, in softer accents. "How am I to come near the little fellow?"

"I'll unhook the big gate if ye say so," replied Sam.

"All right, my boy."

Thus encouraged, the lad ran to the great gate and opened it. Policeman Dennis O'Toole, in a far different uniform from that in which he figured at Mrs. Truelove's Christmas tree, entered the yard, and approaching the dead boy and stooping down, raised the little frozen face and gazed sorrowfully upon it.

"Poor little boy!" he said. "He's frozen shure. And his poor mother—what'll she say? Thanks be to Heaven it's not me little Dinis!"

After a brief contemplation of the dead boy's face O'Toole raised the little corpse in his arms and moving towards the gate said:

"Ye can wait till I'm clare of the yard, and then hook the gate behind me. Ye can crawl out the same way ye come in."

The boys following these directions secured the gate and then crept out through the broken board hole in the fence. They were both shivering in the deadly blast.

Said Sam to his companion:

"What for did ye quit the cave on such a night?"

"Oh, that's all gone," replied Bill. "The coppers found it out and drove us away long ago. We've slept here and there in boxes and barrels for many a night."

"I'll tell ye what's best for ye to do," said Sam, in a whisper, as they walked on behind the policeman; "turn down the fust corner and run, or ye'll be locked up. The body of the little feller is all right now. They'll bury him, and ye can't do him no more good."

The comrade of the dead boy saw the propriety of the suggestion, and at the next corner they shook hands and stole away in opposite directions, Sam keeping near to the river.

The policeman was too cold to pay much attention to his followers, and when he missed them at length he was not seriously disconcerted but held on his way with his burden.

But the shivering lad with the loaf of bread and the oysters in his arms had full opportunity now to dwell upon his anxiety for Bessie and Pup. He was burdened with apprehension for their safety. The terrible blast of the winter night seemed to press upon his lungs like lead as he breathed it. Would he find the children under the wharf stark and lifeless like the poet-thief?

He hurried on, keeping to the street which ran parallel with the docks and the endless line of shipping. His purpose to reserve all the oysters until he had rejoined the children gave way at length under his own pangs of hunger. He carefully calculated his own third of the oysters and then ate them greedily, together with his third of the bread. He estimated in his third, however, the oysters and the bread he had given to the famishing Bill.

Then partially refreshed by his meal he ran on again toward the place where he had concealed his boat.

Presently a confusion arose behind him, and in another minute horses flew past him, dragging in full flight a steam fire-engine with its polished brass and steel equipments, which glistened in the moonlight. He ran on and was soon passed by another flying vehicle, with eager firemen seated on the top and urging their horses in full speed. Finally there seemed to be no end to the gathering engines. While Sam was wondering where the fire could be he heard one man say to another, in answer evidently to a question respecting the locality of the conflagration:

"The tallow wharf is on fire, and it has caught the shipping."

A thrill of agony passed over Sam as the fatal tidings met his ear. He ran on with wild and horror-stricken face.

High upon the wharf in endless rows, were piled barrels of tallow which had that day been unslipped

And under that fearful mass of bursting and flaming barrels was the platform on which lay Bessie and Pup.

When Sam reached the place where his boat was secured he hastily threw off the rope which bound it to the shore and pulled out into the river. The moonlit stream was already alive with boats hastening to the succour of vessels which had not yet caught the flames. Several ships were on fire and abandoned close to the wharf. In some of them the tarred ropes aloft and the furled sails were on fire, and the whole intricate network of masts, cordage and ladders was traced in flames. The wharf itself was plainly visible, and utter destruction was inevitable. The funeral pile of the little girl and Pup was sublime in its fearful beauty. To one spectator it was a scene of unutterable agony. A few moments before the boy's life was full of hope. Now over that young heart a blight had swept and everything fresh and beautiful was gone. An ambition to be something great before men had but an instant before been rampant. Now a sickening sensation came over him, and after gazing hopelessly over the scene of the tragedy he pulled away for the opposite shore, to avoid the crash of tugs and vessels and row boats which moved in every direction across the stream on their errands of mercy or flight.

(To be continued.)

#### PLUCK—A FABLE.

THE hopelessness of any one's accomplishing anything without pluck is illustrated by an old East Indian fable. A mouse that dwelt near the abode of a great magician was kept in such constant distress by its fear of a cat that the magician, taking pity on it, turned it into a cat itself. Immediately it began to suffer from its fear of a dog, so the magician turned it into a dog. Then it began to suffer from fear of a tiger, and the magician turned it into a tiger. Then it began to suffer from its fear of hunters, and the magician, in disgust, said, "Be a mouse again. As you have only the heart of a mouse it is impossible to help you by giving you the body of a nobler animal." And the poor creature again became a mouse.

It is the same with a mouse-hearted man. He may be clothed with the powers, and placed in the position of brave men, but he will always act like a mouse; and public opinion is usually the great magician that finally says to such a person, "Go back to your obscurity again. You have only the heart of a mouse, and it is useless to try to make a lion of you."

**A FORMIDABLE WEAPON.**—A torpedo of a remarkable character has been experimented upon at Woolwich in the presence of Mr. Goschen. It seems to be a most formidable weapon, and calculated to be fatal to a ship when discharged at a distance of half a mile.

**CURE FOR DRUNKENNESS.**—It has been proved recently by experiments made in France that persons addicted to drinking have been cured by having a good cup of tea or coffee always within reach. When the craving for liquor comes on a few sips of good tea or coffee at once extinguish it for a length of time, and by a certain amount of perseverance the habit of drunkenness can thus be entirely overcome.

**THE FLORA OF FRANCE.**—The invasion of France by the Germans has had a curious influence on the flora of the former country. A large number of foreign plants chiefly from the South of Europe, the seeds of which were brought by the invading army along with forage, and other means, have sprung up in the neighbourhood of Paris, and established themselves either temporarily or permanently. Two French botanists have published a "Flora Obsidionalis," or flora of the two sieges, including 190 species hitherto unknown to the district. Nearly the whole of them belong to families of plants employed for forage or other commissariat purposes, 58 being species of the leguminosae, or pea and clover tribe, 34 compositae, and 82 grasses, the remaining 66 belonging to other orders.

**SURGEON DECLINES.**—Mr. C. H. Spurgeon is among those who have received a tempting offer to join in the American lecture campaign. The other day Mr. Spurgeon gave his own version of the affair and how it ended. He said:—"I will tell you one little thing that happened to me this afternoon. I had a letter from a gentleman well known in America giving me this offer: 25,000 dollars for 25 lectures—that is, 200*l.* for each lecture. On these terms the 25 nights would give me 5,000*l.*, and in a hundred nights I should have 20,000*l.* Besides this, I should be allowed to lecture for as many more nights as I chose, so that I might in the course of a year be worth 40,000*l.*, and no doubt the persons who undertake this would earn ten times the amount. I have nothing to do but leave you for a year and come home with 20,000*l.* or 40,000*l.* If I stay here, I shall have nothing like that. What do you suppose was my

answer to this offer? I wrote 'If you were to multiply that offer by one hundred times, and again a hundred times, I should feel it as easy to decline as I do now when I say that I cannot cross the ocean to lecture upon any subject whatever. I am a minister of the Gospel, and I never lectured for money, and do not intend to do so now, and if my people cannot support me it is a pity.' Some people would say, 'Why not go over to America and get the money to build the College?' I shall not do so, because I would not do one thing to degrade myself nor disgrace you. I shall not make any appeal to another country to do what you can and ought to do."

**PRICES OF EGGS.**—At a recent meeting of the Perthshire Society of Naturalists the president in the course of his address gave the prices of a few eggs which he had received from a London house:—Golden eagle eggs, 1*l.* 5*s.* each; merlin, long-eared owl, and tawny owl's eggs, 1*s.* 6*d.* each; white wag-tail, gray wagtail, goldfinch, lesser redpoll's eggs, 6*d.* each; skink's eggs, 2*s.* 6*d.* each; northern diver's eggs, 10*s.* each; and the common snipe's eggs, 6*d.* each.

**THE FEVER TREE.**—An immense tree has been introduced into various provinces of Brazil from Australia, and called, as in Spain, the fever tree, from its "marvellous results in the treatment of intermittent fevers." The tree is colossal, sometimes attaining a height of 300 feet, and a diameter of 80 feet. All parts are aromatic, less so in the trunk and bark, more so in the small roots, flowers and leaves. It is a comparatively new medicine, and is given internally for intermittent fever, in doses of from one to four drachms of the powdered leaves—twice during the intermissions—or in infusions (two drachms in four ounces of boiling water) morning and evening. Aqueous and alcoholic extracts, in doses of from two to eight grains, are also used for the same disease.

**COAL SUPPLY.**—Good news as to the future of the coal supply is furnished in the very promising character of the sinkings and borings that are being made at what is known as the Fair Oaks Colliery, and likewise at Huntington. The locality is upon the verge of the present proved Cannock Chase District, and, together, the area embraces upwards of 7,000 square yards. Experienced geologists and mining engineers feel certain from the evidence that coal is there; and it is significant that in the nearest colliery, that of the West Cannock Company, twenty seams of coal and all the ironstone measures have been found. This will encourage farther investigations throughout the enclosed space lying between South and North Staffordshire and Shropshire. Sinking operations have been recommended at Sandwell, near to Birmingham, by which it will be recollected it is hoped to prove coal between the Shropshire and Warwickshire coal-fields.

#### Nobody Cares.

THE first thing that rids one of that horrible self-consciousness that is the bane of youth is an inkling of the fact that everybody is most anxious about himself, and that you are not the principal object of interest.

It is her dress that she is thinking about. It is his moustache that interests him.

Probably nobody notices that very thing that makes you anxious—the pimple on your nose, the new glove that has played you false and split up the back, the dreadful blunder you made in speaking.

Once make yourself sure of this, and you will take life easier, enjoy yourself at a party, and be able to make yourself agreeable. Look as well as you can by all means. Do as well as you can always; but if you get a misfit, or make a blunder, remember that very probably nobody cares, and forget it speedily. All the rest of the world is labouring under the weight of its own identity, just as you are.

#### CHARLEY GALE.

By the Author of "The Lily of Connaught."

#### CHAPTER XIII.

Death may usurp on nature many hours,  
And yet the fire of life kindle again.

Shakespeare.

TIME passed on, every day bringing dismal reports from the chamber of Charley Gale, until at last the doctor made the frightful announcement that the disease was not only dangerous to the sufferer but to all that came in contact with him, and advised his removal to an hospital.

This was the signal for sedition. Frank rose in arms against the mandate, and impugned the doctor's knowledge, while all the angry eloquence of his sister was directed against his cowardice and coldness of heart. She asserted her dignity as "queen of the castle," and set her royal face against the re-

moval of the patient. She denounced the hospital as the residence of Death, where students slaughtered their patients without compunction for the sake of a hand or a foot or a heart, or some such trifle as the course of their studies might require, and she had not the least doubt but this doctor was in league with those students. She had always looked upon him as a mercenary, unreliable man since the time when he gave her his gold watch to induce her to take medicine, and took it back again after she had swallowed his nasty dose. If this was the reward for being brave, and saving the lives of the children of rich people, it would be better to be born a coward like this vampire of a doctor. Why, people that lived in two rooms wouldn't send away the boy; it would be the doctor they would send away.

Mr. Quillington arrived in time to catch a portion of the torrent of baseeeling and reproach, for the little lady's feelings were enlisted in the cause, and she was no respecter of persons.

Why did he pull Charley Gale out of the water? He should have let him die where he could have gone to the undertaker whole, instead of sending him to be carved alive like an Abyssinian ox.

A compromise was effected, after much chaffering, by which the patient was allowed to remain, the portion of the house in which he lay being quarantined, and all intercourse between him and the family cut off until the danger should be past. Pinky retired triumphantly, and Frank did homage to her prowess and humanity by squeezing her fingers until she screamed. A short time afterwards he met her on the way to her room. She carried something in her apron, and the tears were running down her cheeks.

"Your crying!" he exclaimed, in astonishment. "What is the matter, Pinky? Where have you been?"

"I've been to see him," she said.

"You have?"

"Yes, for the last time, Frank. I couldn't help it. But it was an awful sight. He didn't know me. He screamed at me, and he is so changed that I didn't know him. You should see him, Frank, he looks so odd. There's no one there but the nurse, wetting his mouth with eggs and brandy. His eyes are faded and glittering and glassy. His lips are all swollen and cracked, and his tongue is as hard and black as a parrot's. And, oh, Frank!" she cried, sobbing, "as if that wasn't enough, they have cut off his splendid black hair close to his head, and made him look like a monkey. Isn't it a shame? See! Just see!"

She opened her apron and displayed a mass of glossy black locks. Frank stared at her in astonishment.

"Oh!" he said. "If father and mother knew!"

"Ain't you afraid?"

"No," she answered. "I'm going to save this in spite of the doctor, but you mustn't tell mother."

She hurried into her room, and Frank went to pay his last stolen visit to his afflicted friend.

Mr. Weldon and the schoolmaster were in secret session in the library. These sessions had been very frequent of late, for Mr. Quillington was now a regular visitor, and the conversations were supposed principally to refer to the dispersing of the cloud that surrounded Charley. But although influence had been brought to bear, and money had been lavished without stint, the detectives were unable to lay their hands upon the mysterious burglar, but it was a settled theory that he was a convict lately escaped from detention—a former client of Ears Oritelles, the other worthy whose presence was required. This was a significant fact and added to the complication. The watching of Job Wignar did not result in anything, and no more was heard or seen of Senor Manuel De La Rosa, so the game stood blocked.

Mr. Weldon frequently regretted his foolish delicacy that hindered him from examining the papers more fully when he had them in his hands, but it was no good crying over spilt milk he said.

Still the two gentlemen had their plans, deep and mysterious, and their meetings with closed doors continued, to the disgust of the inquisitive part of the household.

Mr. Weldon seemed to be carrying on a very voluminous correspondence, and Mr. Quillington had nearly totally resigned the management of the academy to his assistants, and seemed to be seized with a vagabondish detective fever that impelled him continually to stroll the high-ways and bye-ways of the city when he wasn't closeted with Mr. Weldon.

Thus things went on for a long time, Charley Gale still fighting for life, while his friends were battling for his interests. But at last one evening when Mr. Quillington's time for calling was long past, a rough, dirty-looking man came to the door with a note as rough and dirty-looking as himself. It was in pencil, wet and crumpled. No one would ever have recognized in the scrawling the copperplate hand of the schoolmaster. It looked as if it had been written against a brick wall in a rain storm, and ran thus—



**"IN THE STREET, MIDNIGHT."**

"DEAR FRIEND.—The time has come. I am on the track and must start without seeing you, lest the fox evade me. You will hear from me soon. Be ready to start when I say, 'Come.'"

"Yours,

**"CHARLES QUILLINGTON."**

Mr. Weldon rubbed his hands with an air of satisfaction, and strode the floor as if he was pausing to be off that minute.

"What is it, pa?" asked his wife.

"Nothing, dear, nothing," he said, looking as mysterious as a phonographer, and then he went up to Charley Gale's room and put his finger on the boy's pulse and removed the damp cloth to lay his hand on his forehead.

"He'll do," he said. "He's as plucky in body as he is in spirit. He'll fight it off."

But it was a long, dreary fight for Charley, a strange, weird fight, like the helpless struggle we have with a horrible night-mare. He seemed to be in some subterranean place and felt an oppression as if the whole earth crust was pressing upon him. It was a realm of shadows. Strange shapes moved around him, and one gigantic demon sat continually by his side lading liquid fire down his parched throat. There were friendly figures too, but they were very indistinct—he could not recognize them—he only knew that their presence gave him pleasure; and occasionally angels appeared. They were always clothed in pink and fluttered in tremblingly as if they were chilled and frightened by the gloomy atmosphere, and bent over him with pitying looks till the demon with the fire-ladle would growl at them, and then they would flutter away again to their native sunshine, leaving him in greater darkness than before.

Thus it went on and on until he became sensible that it was getting gradually lighter, and that the air was fresher and cooler. The sounds were not so muffled and dull. He heard human voices and music and singing, and the liquid fire resolved itself into brandy, and disgusted him so that he spat it out and dashed the ladle to the floor to the utter astonishment of the ministering demon, who sprang up, shouting:

"He's saved! He's saved!"

He recognized the voice and turned to see in the demon the massive form, broad red face, and watery blue eyes of Kitty Nolan. The sun was shining brightly into the room, and the rustle of leaves and the twitter of birds sounded without, but above these sounds he heard the soft notes of a sweet voice singing, and he recognized them as Pinky's. He remembered them well, they had often cheered him in his struggle through the valley of shadows.

Suddenly the music ceased, for Kitty had alarmed the house by calling aloud in the excess of her joy, and the next minute the fairy musician burst into the room with white face and frightened eyes. But as soon as she saw the boy held up in Kitty's arms, and caught the faint smile of recognition, a flush sprang to her cheeks, as roseate as the lining of a sea-shell, and she sprang forward with a laugh, and seized his two emaciated hands.

"Oh, Charley, Charley! I am so glad—so happy!" she cried; but her voice choked, and she buried her burning face in Kitty's bosom for a moment, and then fled from the room as her mother and the servants entered in alarm.

The expressions of joy at the boy's recovery were warm and frequent, and the emotion caused by them was too much for him in his weak state. He sank exhausted.

Mrs. Weldon cleared the room, and drew the heavy curtains close, that he might rest, and then retired, leaving him alone with Kitty.

All was dark and still for a time, and Kitty thought he slept, but he put out his hand and touched her.

"Kitty!" he said, weakly.

"Yes, dear."

"Ain't they very good?"

"Yes, dear. It's not always golden hearts and golden stars go together. But Heaven has favoured them."

"May Heaven always favour them, Kitty!"

"Amen, dear!"

"And you, too, Kitty, for your kindness."

"Hush, dear child—don't mind me! Don't talk, but go to sleep."

There was a long, long pause, and then the boy again touched the woman's big, fat hand.

"Kitty!" he said.

"What is it, dear?"

"What do you think of Pinky?"

Kitty bent over him till her breath fanned his wasted cheek as she said:

"She's an angel, Charley dear, and her heart is one of Heaven's jewels, and when you are a man that jewel will be yours."

"Oh, Kitty, what are you talking about?"

"I'm tellin' your fortune, Charley dear. If I'm not a prophet, you may call me Katydid."

"Katydid!" whispered Charley, with a happy, tremulous laugh.

And Pinky's voice, singing joyously, seemed to answer it.

The rejoicing at Charley's recovery was general. From the genial banker to the lowest of his menials, every face beamed with satisfaction. When Frank came from school and found his friend able to recognize him and speak to him his joy knew no bounds.

Then that ferocious and mercenary physician came and congratulated the young warrior on his victory, and prophesied the early return of his strength and rapid growth of his hair, for Charley had been very proud of his locks (we all have our weaknesses), and he could not refrain from looking mournful at the thought of the ridiculous figure he must out.

And would anybody believe it? that hollow-hearted medicine-man had the audacity to take advantage of the joyful occasion to try to make friends with Pinky, who had never spoken to him since the day of his proposal to send his patient to the hospital; but his overtures were indignantly repulsed.

Under Kitty's motherly attendance the work of recovery went bravely on, and Charley was soon able to sit at the window and watch the sparrows and swallows and the bursting of buds and blossoms, for the snow had vanished and the spring had come with sunny smiles and enlivening breath, and under its genial influence the colour stole back to his cheeks and the light to his eyes. His chamber was the favourite sitting-room of the house. Here Mrs. Weldon brought her sewing to keep him company, and Pinky fitted in and out like a butterfly, and sang like a thrush, and drew laughable comparisons between his wasted form and face, girlishly handsome, and the massive proportions of his friend Kitty. Hither came Frank after school hours to chat about the occurrences of the day, and the evening frequently brought Jake to spin yarns; he had noticed the horrors of Charley's favored fancies and with excellent discretion avoided everything exciting.

They all exerted themselves to make him feel contented and happy, and yet frequent fits of gloom came over him, and strangely enough these were caused by his thinking of Pinky and of Kitty's prophecy of what should happen when he was a man. He felt ashamed of the doubtful position he occupied in this family, and he could not help thinking that Pinky, much as she despised princes, would look with still more scorn upon a boy that crept into manhood in a state of dependency. It would never do. He longed to be strong again that he might strike out for himself. Why should he await the unravelling of mummy mysteries when independence waited on exertion? Thousands had commenced the world under worse auspices than himself. Why should he falter?

Still it seemed spiteful that he should get a glimpse of fortune, as it were, and then be disappointed, and he inquired again and again the particulars of the robbery and what Mr. Weldon remembered of the contents of the papers. The answers were unsatisfactory, and only perplexed him.

The desire for action seemed to hasten the return of health and strength, and he was soon able to walk round the house and garden, weakly indeed, but each day growing brighter and better. These were the happiest days of his life. He and Pinky read and played, sang, and did gardening together, before and after her solitary hours, and when at last his health was fully restored, and his return to school proposed he felt his studies very irksome, for Kitty's prophecy had been fulfilled inversely—Charley was in that dangerous state which men term "love-struck" and boys call "being spooney."

He spoke to Mr. Weldon of his objection to trespassing on his hospitality, and his desire for honourable employment at which he could earn his own living.

The gentleman admired and praised the feeling that prompted him to this, but he gently argued away his scruples and insisted on his continuance at school for the present.

"Why, Charley, my boy," he said, in a bluff manner, "you don't know what's in store for you. I am expecting good news for you every day the sun rises. Be patient, and stick to your books."

But the sun rose many days, and there was no word from Mr. Quillington. So Charley astonished the academy boys one morning by walking in and taking his seat. A faint buzz of welcome greeted him, for he was a general favourite; but it was angrily quelled by the acting principal.

The personage upon whom Mr. Quillington's duties had devolved was a crusty, ill-natured man, named Quacken—Whackem the boys called him, from his fondness of venting his ill-nature on the scholars by striking them with a pointer, or ruler, or

whatever came handy, when they displeased him. But, with all his severity, he had not half the command over the boys that the gentlemanly and dignified Mr. Quillington had possessed. They respected the latter, and found pleasure in obeying him; they despised Quacken, and delighted to torment him.

Charley and Frank had hardly entered the room when the latter went up and requested the teacher to change either his seat or Charley's, so that the two might sit at the same desk.

Mr. Quacken told him that it didn't matter to him where they sat; they might speak to their present desk-mates and arrange it among themselves.

Thereupon Frank canvassed Charley's desk-mate; but that young gentleman liked Charley and hated Mat Morton, so he was immovable. Then he asked Mat Morton if he would change places with Charley; but Mat was offended at the preference that this request showed, and doggedly refused to stir.

"Never mind!" whispered Frank to Charley; "I'll smoke him out!"

Charley knew that this meant that he would make Mat's seat so hot for him that he would be glad to leave it, and he patiently awaited developments; for he knew that Frank was a perfect master in mischief when he was started.

Mat Morton was at best a dull boy, and in addition to that was a very lazy one. He was a great shirker of his lessons, and hence was so ignorant that he had to depend altogether on the promptings of Frank to get through. This habit had grown upon him so that when asked the very simplest questions he never tried to think for himself, but plucked or nudged Frank for the information, and then repeated whatever he whispered to him. Frank took advantage of this immediately to commence the "smoking-out" process.

The lesson was on English history, and Mr. Quacken had already bitten the end off a pointer with anger at the stupidity of the class—willful stupidity most of it was—when, as luck would have it, he turned his eyes to Mat Morton, and growled:

"Master Morton, why was the son of Edward the Third called the Black Prince?"

Master Morton, taken by surprise, plucked and nudged Frank desperately.

The teacher noticed the action.

Frank whispered, and Mat bawled out at the top of his voice:

"Because he was a coloured man!"

A scream of laughter burst from the whole class, and Quacken sprang from his seat in a rage.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" he cried, savagely. "Do you mean to jibe me?"

"No—no, sir!" cried Mat, who was afraid of the pointer that trembled in the teacher's hand.

"Why, then, do you give me such answers as that?" demanded Quacken, angrily.

Mat's face was crimson, for he saw the grinning countenances of all the class turned upon him in enjoyment of his confusion. He knew that Frank had sold him, and he answered, quickly:

"'Twas Weldon told me, sir."

"Oh! 'Twas Weldon told you, sir, was it?" said Quacken, with a scowl; "and pray, Master Morton, did I ask Weldon?"

"No, sir."

"And what right had you to ask him?"

Mat was silent, and Mr. Quacken twirled the pointer viciously; he felt like having a little exercise, but he purbed himself.

"I have noticed this prompting before," he said, "and I am determined to put a stop to it. You will gather your books together and change seats with Master Gale."

Thus to the joy of both Frank and Charley their purpose was accomplished at the first hit. Mat Morton proceeded to obey the order, but while he was emptying his desk he took the chance to abuse Frank heartily behind the raised lid.

"I know why you did this, Frank Weldon," he said. "It was to get that pauper Charley Gale alongside of you."

"See here, Mat," said Frank, in a whisper, for he was in view of the teacher, "you're a mean coward; you'd bite your tongue out before you'd say that to Charley Gale's face. You mustn't talk that way any more to me; Charley Gale's my friend, and I won't hear him spoken ill of."

"You won't, eh?" cried Mat, with a snarl. "How will you help yourself? What will you do?"

"I'll either thrash you or you'll thrash me," answered Frank.

"You will, will you?" hissed Mat; "I'll give you a chance. We'll see when we get out. I'll be even with you both for this, my old fellows."

He gathered up his books and went away, scowling at Charley, whom he met coming to supply his place.

"Now, Master Weldon," said Mr. Quacken, "I hope you have got a scholar beside you who will not



[PINKY'S TREASURE.]

need your prompting, and one of whom you will not make sport."

"What was Morton saying?" asked Charley, as the lesson was resumed.

"Going to be even with me. Going to thrash me when he gets me out," said Frank. "I'll give him something to be even for. I'll smoke him out of the academy!"

When it was near the time for recess Quacken called Mat Morton up to the blackboard.

"Here is something for you to do in which you cannot be prompted," said he, and the remark alone was sufficient to upset Mat; so he stammered and blundered away, made worse by the impatient exclamations of the teacher, until the time arrived for the dismissal of the class, when he had to leave his uncomfortable post in disgrace.

But he hadn't got half way down the room when Quacken angrily called him back to wipe his awkward chalk scrawls from the blackboard. This was unusual. It was merely intended as a humiliation by the teacher. Mat performed it with very bad grace, and retired to the waiting-room to be laughed at by the rest of the class.

Most of the scholars hurried to the play-ground to amuse themselves, but several remained in the waiting-room to eat the light luncheons they had brought. Among these was Frank Weldon, and as soon as Mat passed out he slipped quietly into the school-room. It was empty. Mr. Quacken had retired to his room.

Frank, being unprovided in that particular himself, hurriedly purchased a big, thickly buttered slice of bread from one of the boys and noiselessly glided up to the blackboard which Mat Morton had just wiped. Using the bread in the manner of a brush, he rubbed the butter evenly all over the dark surface and beat a hasty retreat.

As soon as the class had reassembled the geometrical lessons were resumed, and Mat was again called to the blackboard.

"A B C is a circle," he said, with a great sweep of his arm, but he stepped back, gazing with amazement, for the chalk made no mark.

"Well, what is it?" snapped the teacher, whose back was to the blackboard, so that he did not see the reason of the pause.

"A B C is a circle," stammered Mat, trying again.

"Or we'll suppose it is," whispered Frank, and Charley and he burst out laughing.

"Masters Weldon and Gale," said Quacken, sternly, "since you are so ready to laugh at others, please step this way and show us what you can do yourselves."

The two offenders left their seats and ascended the platform, where the dumbfounded Mat stood gazing at the blank, black tablet.

"You, Master Gale, go through with that demonstration."

Here was a fix, but there was nothing for it but to try, and Charley took the chalk and swept the board with as little effect as Mat had done.

"Well, what's the matter?" cried the teacher.

"The chalk won't mark," answered Charley.

"It won't, eh?" cried Quacken, springing from his seat impatiently, and, seizing the crayon with a withering smile, he made a dash at the board, but the point slid over it as if it had been glass, leaving no mark behind.

All the boys in the class who were in the secret of the greasing, including Frank and Charley, began to laugh.

"Silence!" roared Quacken, striking the desk furiously with a ruler. "What's the meaning of this?" he exclaimed, looking at the crayon.

The point of it was covered with grease. He slapped his hand upon the board and then put it to his nose.

"It's butter!" he roared, savagely, in a tone expressive of his disgust. "Who buttered the blackboard?"

Such a wild scream of laughter as this question caused had never before disgraced the shades of the Quillington Academy. There was no stopping it. The gesticulations and anger of Quacken only made it worse. He was furious with rage.

"It was you, sir!" he yelled, seizing the frightened and astonished Mat by the collar, and commencing to belabour him with the pointer. "I'll teach you to play jokes on me! I'll show you how to wipe off a blackboard!"

Mat roared lustily, and the rest of the class screeched with laughter.

The noise was so great that the assistants from the other departments rushed in.

"I didn't! I didn't do it!" roared Mat.

"Who did, then?"

"I don't know. It was them. They've got a spite against me. It was Weldon or Gale."

Quacken liberated Morton and seized Frank.

"It was you! Speak! Was it you?" he cried.

"Yes, 'twas I," said Frank.

The man gave an angry cry and made a furious blow at him, but Charley Gale sprang in and wrenching the pointer from his grasp broke it beneath his foot. Quacken now seized him also, and the assistant teachers rushed in to help him, but they were beaten back by a perfect volley of books, while the

room rang with wild groans, hisses and cat-calls.

"Let them go! Let them go! Don't let him hit you, Frank! Punch him, Charley! Throw him out of the window!"

Quacken suddenly disappeared behind his desk, for the united strength of Frank and Charley had hurled him to the floor. His associates rushed to his rescue, but a heavy shower of slates and leaden ink-bottles caused them to take to flight, and the boys called to Charley and Frank to make good their escape. As they were breaking away Charley came face to face with Mat Morton, who tried to hinder their escape. He drew off and gave him a right-hander and a left as quick as lightning.

"There!" he said, as Mat Morton tumbled over the sprawling Quacken. "That's one for Frank Weldon and one for myself. May you be happy together."

"Come!" cried Frank, "let us leave this gay and festive scene. It's uncomfortably warm."

They escaped with no damage but the ruffling of their clothes, and, like discreet generals, they hastened homewards in order to file their report of the battle first. This was scarcely accomplished when the whole faculty appeared, with Quacken puffing at their head, to complain of insubordination and riot. But he got a very cool reception, and instead of the condolence he expected was severely rebuked for presuming to lift a stick to his scholars. There had nothing of the sort happened under Mr. Quillington's rule. Mrs. Weldon said, and until that gentleman returned, at least, she thought it better not to send her boys to the academy.

"Her boys!" How strangely pleasant that sounded to Charley, how harshly her decision fell upon the ears of Quacken. There were two good paying pupils and his chance of retaliation gone at a stroke. He and his associates retired with very bad grace, and his feelings were little improved when a half-dozen voices from behind the fences and shrubbery chorused:

"Quack! Quack! Quack! Who buttered the blackboard?"

A party of the boys had followed him to see the upshot of the affair, and this was their triumphant salute as soon as they saw by his angry face that he had been discomfited. His furious threats and actions made the matter worse, for the street boys caught the ridiculous words, and at every corner on his way home his ears were assailed by the insulting question:

"Who buttered the blackboard?"  
(To be continued.)





[THE MYSTERY OF THE RING.]

## THE FOOT TICKLER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*"Evelyn's Plot," "Darcy's Child," "One Sparkle of Gold," &c., &c."*

## CHAPTER XL.

Like early, unrequited love,  
One spot exists which ever blooms.  
Ev'n in that deadly grove  
A single rose is shedding there  
Its livid lustre, meek and pale,  
It looks as planted by despair.

"So you have only questionable news of your mistress, Jenkins," said Eustace Villiers, in one of the frequent visits he had, for some reason or other, occasion and inclination to pay at the deserted Rookery.

"Very doubtful, sir. Mrs. Mordant does not seem to gain strength after her bad illness, even in foreign parts. Indeed, I hardly think she will get much farther than Paris, after all, if the last accounts are true."

"Indeed. That is very remarkable," returned Eustace, carelessly; "but there seems a fatality in these things just now—what may, indeed, be called an epidemic—especially in this county, Jenkins. Mrs. Villiers is in an extremely delicate state of health, and were it not for her own earnest entreaties, and this discouraging example, I should be inclined to try the effect of softer air upon her constitution. But, as it is, I think it is better to give her the chance of renovation afforded by her native air and rest and complete absence from excitement."

Jenkins gave a grim smile.

"As you say, it seems like a fatality, sir," he observed, coolly. "Yet I have no fear; when I take my pretty little Laura for a wife she'll keep her health safe enough, I'll warrant. I've fancied many a time that my lady had something on her mind. And, indeed, I've small faith in these nervous fits and vapours, you see, sir. You and I know too much of the world for that."

Eustace somewhat recoiled from the familiarity of the jocosé steward, but a glance which he caught of the determined visage of the man seemed to act as an anodyne to the wrath which glittered in his dark eyes.

"At any rate, we know too much of each other's plans and objects, Jenkins," he said, with an assumption of cordial goodfellowship; "and you know how to feather your nest and make it comfortable for your mate—eh, Jenkins?—which I shall not fail to enable you to do in first-rate style. Your pretty Laura shall have silks and satins and jewels fit for a duchess, if

you keep faith with me. But then I must have that paper, you see—yes, and the ring too, my good man. I can only give nothing for nothing," he added, with a significant nod.

Jenkins looked inquiringly at him.

"I don't quite see what you want with it," he asked, coolly.

"Perhaps not, but that will not alter the question. I do want it, and, what is more, I shall only execute my promises on receiving it."

"Your engagement was given on the receipt of the information which I promised, and which I have given you," returned Jenkins, stoutly.

"But which needs to be supplemented by the actual proofs," was the firm retort. "You have it in your power. I have the right and the will to purchase that power, and I will not waste words or money on anything less."

Still Jenkins hesitated.

"Harkye, sir," he said. "I am not quite such a rascal as to forget any benefits I have received, even if they are pretty well requited on my part. And Miss Celia—or Mrs. Mordant, as I should call her—has put many a fat bank-note in my purse, that will flourish there for long days to come. And what I want to know is whether you intend to do her any harm if I give up this precious paper that came in my hands no one knows—but myself—how."

"On my faith and honour, on the word of a gentleman—no," emphatically returned the bland husband of Irene Delancy. "My good friend, ask yourself what possible interest I can have in such a proceeding. I am already married to a beautiful and wealthy bride; my means are ample, my desires more than gratified. If I had any wish left ungratified, it would certainly not be the destruction of my fair neighbour, whatever slips she may have committed in former years. I give you my plighted word that, except under pressure that it is almost impossible to foresee, I will never do aught by word or deed to deprive Celia Vyvian of her heritage. Will not that suffice, my good fellow?" he added, with a half-smile on his face.

"Well, I grant that you speak fair enough, and I do not see that you have any motive for playing me false," was the reply. "But I must have the money down, remember, at the same time when I give the paper—yes, and your receipt for the document into the bargain."

Eustace perhaps somewhat winced under the man's determined words, but he recovered himself almost before the weakness could be perceptible.

"It seems to me that such a receipt would only compromise you, Jenkins, while if the matter were

clean out of your hands there could not be the smallest suspicion resting on you. However, we will not quarrel about trifles. The one great point is that document, that is worth all the rest besides. The money shall be yours—ay, and some jewels that will be as sparkling as your Laura's eyes—in a week from this time, if you choose."

"Say a fortnight, if you please, sir," returned the man, chattering. "In that time Carlos, the Spanish page, will have left to join his mistress, and I shall be more my own master than I am now."

"Master!" repeated Eustace. "You, a mature, almost elderly man, to talk of restraint or control from a stripling! You must be jesting, my friend."

"You would find him an awkward customer to deal with yourself, sir," returned the steward, indignantly, "and more especially when he's got his lady's authority at his back. Mr. Villiers, I tell you there's more in Carlos Montijo's head than either you can suspect or conquer. That's my judgment."

"Explain yourself, my good man," said the gentleman, averting his own face from observation. "What do you suppose is the secret of that foreigner's influence, young and strange as he is?"

Jenkins hesitated for a few moments. "Come, come, if we are to act together in this matter there should be no secrets between us," said Mr. Villiers, blandly. "My bargain would not be complete if I had not full information as to the mode of action which may be necessary."

The steward stooped forward and spoke suddenly in Eustace's ears.

"It is easily explained," he said. "The simple truth is that Carlos Montijo worships his mistress with a mad, daring love, and hates her husband with as intense a jealousy. Now you have the whole key to his power and my reluctance to risk any discovery or suspicion."

Eustace meditated for a few minutes, with a sudden beam of satisfaction in his face that somewhat perplexed the steward.

"Yes, that is really most amusing," he said, at last, with a laugh—"quite a farce in the midst of a tragedy. The idea of a page of low degree loving an heiress is too sublime. However, as you say, one must guard oneself against him. Is there any especial time when he is about the premises, or where does he spend his time in the usual way?"

"Oh, he is very frequently away from the Rookery, making some purchases to send to Mrs. Mordant," replied the steward; "but in the early morning he is often up, wandering I never know where, though he returns for his breakfast about nine. But it's all pretty safe between twelve and five, you see, Mr."

Villiers, for he's sure to be away on his business, whatever that may be, during those hours."

"Precisely so. Then I shall be able to time my visits accordingly," returned Eustace, with his inscrutable smile. "You may rely on my discretion with regard to this interesting domestic of Mrs. Mordant's. He shall not trouble you any longer, Jenkins, when once I have taken him in hand."

And Eustace Villiers took his leave of the steward with a gracious nod and smile, while Jenkins remained in a kind of mystified yet pleasant anticipation of future benefits and present safety that fairly bewildered his brain.

But the gentleman who had occasioned that blissful state of dream to the "unjust steward" was scarcely less absorbed in doubtful thought.

"It is a key," he said to himself, "a key that may unlock the secrets of the past, and open the flood-gates of even greater prosperity than I could have dreamed would be my portion. Truly, Eustace Villiers, you were born under a lucky conjunction of the planets—one that befriended those who have daring will and acute brain to work out their fortunes."

Irene Villiers was lying on a large sofa in her sleeping-room when her dreaded husband entered with the noiseless, cat-like step that forbade any notice of his approach, even to the very ear of expectancy itself.

And his sharp senses at once perceived that there was a slight rustling in Irene's dress—a quick movement of her hand, that excited his suspicions, though he did not appear to notice the little incident.

"Well, my love, are you better to-day?" he inquired, seating himself by her side in lover-like tenderness.

"Yes," she said, quickly. "Yes, because I am one day nearer to the grave. That is the only improvement I can know."

"Hush, hush! This is ungrateful—wicked, my wife," he said, reprovingly. "You, who have every possible comfort that earth can give, should not speak thus. There is but one thing needed—only a child to complete your happiness, and that may come in due time."

For once Irene's pensive face was invested with an almost Southern fierceness.

"Hypocrite," she murmured, in a tone that was not even audible to her own ears, so hushed was its sound.

"Mr. Villiers, I would, for your own sake, pray you to forbear from such mockeries," she said, with an air of cold dignity he had never yet encountered from her.

Irene Delancy had been gentle, subdued, nervously susceptible of every wind that blew from each corner of the heavens.

The orphan bride had been crushed, prostrate, fettered in the bonds she had so rashly and fatally assumed. And the sorrowing, heart-broken wife, the beloved of Victor Mordant, the very slave of Eustace Villiers, had been as an automaton, a powerless mummy in her husband's hands.

It was all different now, when for the first time the trodden worm recoiled against its despoiler, the victim rebelled against the cruel hand that was bending her to the very ground.

And Eustace Villiers was actually bewildered and mute for a few brief moments in the unwonted crisis.

"Mrs. Villiers—Irene—beware! you forget yourself," he said, at length, in a vain attempt to assume his usual imperious, sneering manner.

"No," she said, calmly. "I do not. But I am now past tears, and fast slipping from your power—bad, cruel man. My life is ebbing fast. Your reign of terror will soon be at an end. And the retribution will come. Yes, yes—it may perhaps be delayed, the long-tangled thread may not be all unwound, but it will not fall at last. Heaven's justice will fall like hail on the offenders against its laws."

The words came like a torrent from that usually soft, low voice. The eyes were glittering with the indignant warning that poured from her lips.

No wonder that Eustace, in all his hardness, quailed for an instant before the unwonted outburst from that soft, gentle being, and that there was a solemn silence in the chamber when Irene, exhausted by the unusual vehemence, sank back on the cushions and closed those large, beautiful eyes that had better never have seen the light than have purchased the blessing at so fearful a cost.

Eustace gazed on the wan features, so sharpened and colourless, like a miser examining his possessions, so keen, so fixed and meaning was the look. Was he doubting whether he could preserve that fair creature for his own future peace, his trust gain? Or did he, with a more characteristic, more fiendish calculation, speculate as to the probable

period while she might last as a blessing, a restraint, or a living reproach on his unscrupulous career?

"Irene, this is simple madness," he observed, at last, "the ravings of one who is but tempting Fate and bringing down needless suffering on her head. Are you so hardened, or so in love with the ordeal I am forced to enforce that you should thus provoke it, whether I will or not?"

She gave a wild, ghastly smile, as if her intellects were well nigh failing her in her agony.

"It matters not. It can but hasten my release and your doom. Eustace, hearken ere it is too late. You will not escape. There is a Power above that is stronger than you. It will strengthen me to endure and will avenge my sufferings and wrongs when I am no longer here to endure them."

The dark countenance of the fiendish arbiter of her fate gloomed over to an intensity of hate and revenge that might well alarm a stronger and a sterner nature to the very death.

He approached the couch with closed teeth and a frowning brow.

Irene knew but too well her doom. A low moan escaped her, her eyes closed, and surely her guardian angel wept tears of pity for the sufferings of one so helpless and so innocent. Yet the victim was more to be envied than the cruel, unscrupulous fiend who worked her misery and ruin.

Her sufferings must soon close. His punishment must surely come, if there be power and omniscience to direct its fiery shafts.

#### CHAPTER XLI.

The scene and hour have passed, yet still  
Remains a deep, impassioned thrill—  
A sunset glow on memory.  
That kindles at each thought of thee.  
We loved—how wildly and how well  
"Twas worse than this idle now to tell  
From love and life alike thou'rt free,  
And I am left to think of thee.

"And is it really true that you are the identical celebrated Maddolins, whom I have heard spoken of as a being from another sphere rather than a mere earthly syren?" said Lady Barbara, enthusiastically, as she and the young hostess watched together in a distant recess of the apartment where Celia lay, still weak and suffering, though a calm slumber had at last fallen on her eyelids that promised to refresh the weary nerves.

The young prima donna smiled sadly.

"I fear there is little of the spiritual about me, Lady Barbara. I am very mortal—ay, to my cost," she added, with an irrepressible sigh.

The young daughter of the high-born earl was yet touched to the very core by that tone, that heart-stricken sigh.

"I believe we are terribly unjust and deceived in our ideas of you gifted ones," she said, gently. "We fancy that fame and applause are the very atmosphere of your lives. And it does seem so delightful," she went on, warming with her own enthusiasm, "to command the sympathies of thousands, to be their star, their queen. Poor Irene and I used often to wonder what must be the feelings of these worshipped deities after some of their triumphs. She loved music so passionately that I often used to accuse her of planning her heart on a voice," she resumed, after a slight pause, in which her eyes had wandered to the distant couch where Celia Mordant lay.

"And did she?" suddenly inquired the cantatrice, with an eager look and tone that almost startled Lady Barbara.

"Do you know her, that you seem so strangely interested in her tastes?" she said, watching Maddolins earnestly.

"You forget," she said, "that to one like myself such a description as yours must be interesting, Lady Barbara. And if Miss Delancy was so engrossed by the art she might have surely excelled in it had she wished."

"Miss Delancy? How is it that you know her name?" asked Lady Barbara, quickly.

"I had heard you mention it, I believe," was the confused reply. "And it used to appear in the papers, I remember. It is no common name. But is she living, this ardent lover of music?" she went on, as if to turn the immediate subject.

"Irene Delancy is no more," was the grave, hushed reply. "She is married, like poor Celia yonder, and bears another name."

A forced smile parted Maddolins's beautiful lips. "You seem to have a horror of the marriage state, Lady Barbara," she said, archly, though the voice had a suspicion of tears in its tones.

"Do I? Well, if every match were as perverse as some I have seen it would certainly defy the Pope, with bell, book, and candle, to induce me to venture on it," she returned, with an impatient stamp of her little foot. "I should certainly have forbidden the

banns for Irene Villiers if I had been in hearing when the priest asked whether there was any impediment. I should have spoken, loud enough to have been heard at the dear old Bookery."

Maddolins had little cause to complain of her companion's aversion to matrimony, if the shudder that convulsed her frame could be taken as a sign of her repugnance.

"You are ill, or is it my foolish nonsense that has pained you?" said the earl's daughter, kindly pressing the burning hand of the young singer. "Forgive me. I am so thoughtless. I forget I may be touching some tender chord while venting my own fancies."

The Italian had recovered herself now.

"No, no; it was only a passing tremor," she said. "It must be so terrible to be bound for life where one does not love. And so this friend of yours married some one you do not trust, Lady Barbara?"

"Yes, yes. It is of no use to mourn now," said the girl, impatiently; "only I do so like poor Victor, and Irene was like a sister to me, and I always expected they would marry. Now he is Celia Vyvian's husband, and she is the wife of Mr. Villiers, whom no one ever heard of before. You cannot wonder that it puts me in a very temper of persecution when I think of it."

"Hush!" whispered the hostess. "hush! She is moving; perhaps she heard you. Lady Barbara, you are tired with watching. Let me remain with Mrs. Mordant. I will be a vigilant nurse, I promise you. She shall not need any more tender care, even from you, than I will give her."

There was an anxious earnestness in her manner that Barbara could not comprehend, but her fatigue and want of sleep overruled Maddolins's request, and she slowly yielded, after a noiseless visit to the distant couch, where Celia once more appeared to be sleeping.

Maddolins was alone at last.

There was a storm-cloud passing over her mobile features that changed their expression like a summer thunder cloud.

There were hot tears, a contracted brow, and lightning flashes from her dark eyes as she sat there, her little foot tossing in ungovernable irritation on the cushions where it rested—her hands clasped in a vice-like grasp, the pain of which she did not even feel in the abstracting reverie which had come over her.

"Am I still such an idiot?" she murmured, "and after all that has passed? No, no. It is but the strangeness of the coincidence that brought her here. No. The unlucky husband will arrive ere long. Then it will be for me to crush down all but the conventional courtesies of the hostess—the respectful deference of the theatrical singer. Till then I may indulge this wayward curiosity, this foolish heart-fever, unsuspected and unchecked."

She started from her seat and approached the bed with noiseless steps that could not have broken the faintest doze.

Celia's hand was lying outside the clothes. Its thin fingers were richly ornamented with costly rings that could not hide their unnatural slenderness, though they contrasted painfully with the transparency of the white, bloodless skin.

Maddolins's eyes were keenly fixed on these glittering gems as if lost in admiration of their beauty; but one seemed to attract her more particularly, and she bent cautiously over to examine its stones and setting more minutely.

It was certainly conspicuous, more especially on a lady's finger, as it was composed of a flaming blood-stone, with tiny aquamarines as its setting, and on it was graven a device that might be a monogram or some hidden cypher, so artfully was it concealed in its cunning mingling of lines and letters. The young singer's face assumed a strange and perplexed look as she raised her head from the close examination, and then drew from her own bosom a small chain, to which hung a fanciful variety of tiny chains, heart and seal and cross, and more capricious forms still of those golden trifles.

Maddolins held the seal to her half-dazzled eyes, then gazed once more at the ring's device, and finally walked to the window to inspect yet more clearly the familiar trinket that had hung round her neck from earliest childhood.

"Most extraordinary!" she murmured, "marvellous! Oh, that I might draw it from her finger for a moment, just to compare it with this bauble! But that is impossible."

"And useless," said a low voice near her. "Young lady, you need not commit a theft to gratify your anxiety even for a harmless motive."

Maddolins knew the voice, though but recently heard for the first time, even before she encountered the features of Theresa O'Brien, Mrs. Mordant's attendant, directed sternly towards her.

"Do you suppose I meant to plunder my guest?"



she said, haughtily, "I certainly scarcely expect to be surreptitiously overheard in my own house when I believe myself alone."

"Alone with the sleeper, I suppose, who in that case certainly does not count for a companion," said Theresa, coolly. "Well, I am in such close attendance on my lady that I may almost be reckoned part of herself, signorina, and anything that is singular about her I daresay I can explain as well or better than she would, if you like to ask. And, for instance, would you mind showing me that little bunch of pretty things you have there? Perhaps I can give you a little satisfaction as to what you want to know."

"How can you answer any questions that may perplex me?" said Maddolena, rather haughtily, for she was irritated at the woman's familiar manner more than her words. "You presume too much, my good woman, on my willingness to receive and tend your mistress. I wish for no farther discussion on the subject," she added, replacing the chain in the bosom of her dress.

"Foolish girl. How blind pride and impetuosity make one to one's true interests!" returned Theresa, calmly. "Only to imagine that one whose very heart is crushed with doubts and fears, and is in blind uncertainty as to what she most desires to know, should repel with scorn the chances of solving every mystery because the aged are prone to treat the young as their inferiors in experience, whatever they may be in rank."

The singer looked anxiously, pleadingly in the woman's face.

"Pardon me if I spoke hastily," she said, "but surely it was enough to gall a more patient spirit than mine to have such an accusation even implied, and to be intruded on without permission or even warning."

Theresa gave a scornful laugh.

"If you think that one who, like the Maddolena, can command jewels from monarchs fit for a queen is to be suspected of coveting or appropriating a simple ring you must have a remarkable idea of my folly, young lady. But still I know that you would have given one of your most precious gems to have the power of drawing that trinket from that thin finger, and learning its significance and its key. Is it not so?"

"I was interested, puzzled, I confess," said Maddolena, coldly. "It is so remarkable a device."

"And something like the one you have on the seal attached to your chain. Is it not so, signorina?" asked the woman.

"It appeared to me so. Of course I could not decide on the resemblance unless they were more closely compared," was the reply.

"No, and even then you would not have an idea of the meaning or a clue to the origin of either bauble," returned the woman, calmly. "Yet you scorn and repel the only person who can give you any information on the subject that is of all others the most interesting to you."

Maddolena started suddenly, though she was too proud to altogether betray her curiosity.

"What makes you think I should be so anxious to solve this enigma?" she said, in as calm a tone as she could command.

"Perhaps you have already had it revealed to you," was the keen reply. "Am I right in supposing that my explanation would be superfluous, young lady?"

Maddolena's colour changed as if a cold blast had chilled her very blood.

"This is cruel," she said. "Tell me at once whether you have any knowledge of—any interest in me, or is it simply a device to revenge an imagined slight?"

Theresa shook her head.

"Perhaps one, perhaps both, perhaps neither of these motives actuated me," she replied. "However, it rests with yourself to decide. I for one care very little as to your fancies and suspicions, nor which way they may blow you."

"Then you have no interest in me or in my history?" asked the girl, anxiously.

"As much as one has in a stiff net adrift on the ocean when there is a pleasant excitement as to its cause, or an arrow launched from a bow which may alight one knows not where. You are in some measure connected with those—with one—in whom I have the deepest interest the heart can know," she added, proudly. "That is all."

"You allude to Mrs. Mordant," said Maddolena, somewhat sadly.

"I am not going to answer any questions that may give a clue to the secret which I have carefully preserved for many a long year," returned the woman, determinately. "You might as well beat against your marble statue as attempt to extract one particle of the facts that you would perhaps give half your boasted talent and empty fame to know. But hark!

She is moving. Come to her. The sight of a stranger may, perhaps, bring her to herself more than any less stimulating presence."

Maddolena obeyed, though she chafed under the cold imperiousness and unfeeling reserve of that unyielding woman, who thus repaid the boon which she had received of hospitality and kindness.

"Are you better, Mrs. Mordant?" she said, gently, as she bent over the waking Celia and took one of her hands gently in her own warm ones.

"Yes, yes; much better, thanks," said Celia, in a stronger tone than she had yet spoken. "I remember all that took place now, and how good and kind you must have been, wherever you are," she added, gazing on the beautiful face that bent over her. "How can I repay you?"

"It is quite enough recompense if you escape without any injury from your accident," said Maddolena, gently. "But you must take some refreshment now, before you attempt to talk. I will go and order some for you," she added, rising.

"No, no; do not go. Is not some one else in the room?" she asked, with the sensitive quickness of delicate nerves and fragile health.

"I am here; do you want anything?" said Theresa, calmly approaching. "I should not leave you, of course, to strangers, madam."

"Then do you go, Theresa, and bring me what this lady kindly offers," said Celia, her eyes still fixed on the lovely Italian's. "And you stay," she added. "I like to look at you, to hear your voice. It has something that brings back my early and my happiest days," she murmured, as her singular attendant moved away to obey her unflattering dismissal with a cold, though unobserved smile.

"Yet you cannot have seen me before, for I never was in your country," returned the girl. "And you, I suppose, were brought up in your own birth-place?"

"Yes, but England is not my native land," Celia replied. "I was born in Spain. Sometimes I wish I had never seen that cold, ungenial country, which has brought me nothing but sorrow and illness, and—and," she added, rather to herself than her companion, "a broken heart."

"Hush! you must not talk so despondingly," said Maddolena, her own heart warming with kindly sympathy for one so prostrate and so sad. "Surely you have little to desire now, if what Lady Barbara tells me is true. You have wealth, station, and a noble-hearted husband to share that happiness."

"They are but different forms of the same curse that hangs over my life," returned the invalid, bitterly. "Oh, if I could but recall the past; if I could but feel as I did when I was young, and in the sunny South, with dreams of love and ambition before me. Now it is over for ever—too late for change, too late for repentance, for aught but gilded and secret misery!"

"Can it ever be too late?" said Maddolena. "And yet I knew but too well there are actions which are irrevocable; but few, very few, where the spirit is brave and the heart is true. Mrs. Mordant, it is illness that prostrates you, or you would take another tone," she added, reproachfully.

"It is simply inconceivable that I should talk thus to a stranger," returned Celia, impatiently. "Yet there is an irresistible attraction in your look and accent that makes me feel as if I had known you for years, and in earlier days. It is so different to the cold English tongue, the calm manner, the churchly prudery that questions every look and action. But you never were in England; you do not know the English," she went on, checking herself suddenly.

"Yet you are English, your name, your very wealth is English," expostulated the cantatrice.

A vivid blush, a startled gesture of the reclining frame was a strange proof of emotion at such simple words, and the almost fierce tone in which Celia exclaimed: "Why do you doubt it? How dare you question me so foolishly?" was equally unaccountable to the Italian girl.

"Hush! do not excite yourself. I was but replying to your own words," she replied, soothingly. "I for one have no love for the English. I have little cause," she added, bitterly. "Yes I am going among them. I shall soon taste the cold, repelling treatment of which you speak. Never mind, I have an object, and to accomplish that I would melt an iceberg and quench a volcano if they stood in my path."

"But you could not conquer icy natures or calm fiery passions," waived Celia. "You can but fly their power, as I did. But you are younger; you have not suffered as I have since my earliest girlhood—suffered the burden of a secret on your soul, the fetter of a secret chain that night at any hour be tightened to your destruction—the equal danger from hate and love. All this has crushed me to the very dust; it nearly pushed me into the grave, on the brink of which I trembled; ay, and yet had not courage to seek as my best refuge."

Even Maddolena shuddered at the very agony with which the words were pronounced, and the ideas they seemed to convey.

"Surely you did not, you do not mean that you would—"

"Commit suicide?" said Celia, bitterly. "No, I am too brave and yet too cowardly; but what I did was even more weak and rash. I accepted life when I should have yielded to the death that would have had mercy on me; but then I thought, I believed I might win him."

Maddolena did not catch the last words, though she strained her ears in a curiosity she did not herself comprehend.

At that moment Theresa entered with a tray of tempting delicacies, which she placed before the invalid.

"There," she said, "you must eat to gain strength to return to your own home. Your husband will be awaiting you ere many hours are over. He will have returned from his journey and fancy you have run away from him," she added, with an unpleasant, scornful laugh. "It would be a dreadful scandal for a bride not long out of her honeymoon; but, come, you look pale and weary. I think you have been too much interested in this young lady's talk, Mrs. Mordant. Suppose you sing to her while she eats—in royal fashion, signorina."

"Sing?" repeated Celia, eagerly. "Then you are a true Southern; you inherit the gift, while I—I—I—"

"Hush, hush!" said Theresa, peremptorily. "No more idle parley, Mrs. Mordant. A moment more and you shall judge for yourself. Signorina, I entreat, as a favour, that you will sing to Mrs. Mordant by way of silencing any dangerous exertion on her part."

The cantatrice looked penetratingly on her strongly marked features.

"The voice will not always obey the will," she said, "but I will try, though against my own better judgment—ay, and promise to those who have a claim on my obedience."

She then began, after a brief pause, a strange, romantic, though simple foreign air.

It had little of the brilliant execution, the touching power which the Maddolena had many a time and oft exercised over her hearers, still the swelling richness, the touching pathos that breathed in every note might well go home to the hardest nature.

There were tears in her voice, and a thrilling sweetness in the graceful, little-known air she sang, such as might well convey some idea of her rare powers to those who listened.

But it could scarcely account for the changing of colour, the strained ears, the earnest, staring gaze that Celia fixed on the young cantatrice.

"In Heaven's sake tell me who taught you—where did you hear that?" she exclaimed, when the Maddolena had finished.

"It matters not. It is no one who will ever give me lessons or share knowledge with me more," returned the girl, coldly.

"Is he dead? Is he dead? Only tell me that and I will bless you," returned Celia, passionately, clasping her hands in agonized entreaty, and leaving the nourishment of which she had been slowly partaking.

Maddolena gave a bitter smile.

"I did not say which sex the person was from whom I received that simple ballad, madam; nor have I the least idea whether you can mean more than some remarkable association with the air."

"Yes, yes. It was a friend I knew long years since who taught me once that same song, one that he had caught from the Moors in their partial retention of their Spanish traditions," exclaimed Celia, eagerly. "It is no common, no familiar ballad, signorina. If you would complete your kindness to a stranger grant me that simple favour. It surely should not be deemed so weighty an obligation," she went on, "just to satisfy the anxiety of a long-absent friend."

The cantatrice drew herself haughtily up, and shrank as if from an adder as Celia clasped her hands imploringly in hers.

"Pardon me, madam, but there are secrets in every life; enemies in the garb of friendship haunt our path on every side, and the person whom you call friend may perhaps be my deadly if secret foe. I decline to speak his name or reveal his face."

(To be continued.)

**STEREOGRAPHIC MUSIC.**—We hear of an Italian machine for stereographing music played on the piano. It is to be exhibited at Vienna.

**THE OLD OAK TREE.**—According to a recently published statement, an oak was felled near Newport, in Monmouthshire, measuring 29½ feet in circumference. It was supposed to be 400 years old, from the

number of rings in the grain; and it was stated at the time that the timber sold for 670*l* and the bark for 200*l*. The "Parliament Oak" in Clipstone Park is, according to tradition, one under which Edward I. held a Parliament, and is supposed to be 1,500 years old. At Welbeck Abbey an oak called "The Duke's Walking-stick" is 112 feet high. The "Greendale Oak" covers a space of 700 square yards, and has a coach road cut through it. The "Two Porters" are 100 feet high; the "Seven Sisters" has seven stems 90 feet in height. There are some other extraordinary oaks at Welbeck Abbey. The largest oak in England is said to be at Calthorpe, in Yorkshire; it measures 78 feet in circumference where it meets the ground.

## THE MYSTERY OF FALKLAND TOWERS.

### CHAPTER XXVI.

Our doubts are traitors,  
And make us lose the good we oft might win  
By fearing the attempt.  
*Shakespeare.*

"My lord," said the Earl of Glenmorgan to Lord Falkland, with stinging contempt, "the days of duelling are past—happily so, I think; but when you can prove to me that you are worthy of my steel I shall not deny you that satisfaction you crave."

"The usual high morality excuse which so often stands in the stead of courage!" exclaimed his lordship, with a sorry attempt at a sneer; but he also quitted the apartment.

The earl then, after some converse with Lady Florence, summoned the footman in waiting in the hall.

"There is a young person in the carriage," said he. "Bring her to me."

In a few minutes a modest, firm-looking woman, of middleage, made her appearance, and was presented to Lady Florence as "Richards."

"Good-bye, my little girl," said the Earl of Glenmorgan, kissing his god-daughter's forehead. "I do not think that you will experience any farther annoyance. But Richards here will always be able to give you my address. Heaven bless you!"

When her god-father had gone Lady Florence could not help sitting down and having a little cry, for joy hath also its language of tears.

That day proved to be a stormy one for his lordship of Falkland Towers.

An hour after the departure of the Earl of Glenmorgan from Falkland House found him pacing the floor of his library like a wild beast caged. Madame La Grande was sipping wine at the window, not quite so violent, but fully as sullen and dispirited.

"Well, why don't you speak? Why don't you propose something?" exclaimed his lordship.

"Haven't anything to propose at present," was the sullen rejoinder.

"What? Then you propose to give in?" sneered the other, desperately.

"Oh, yes! That is so much like me to give in!"

"But what shall we do, Bella? By Heaven, I'm frantic! Who has been peaching to the earl?"

"Oh! wouldn't I like to know!" muttered the bad woman, her fine brow darkening, and her eyes flashing balefully.

"It couldn't have been Annette?"

She shook her head moodily, but added:

"I don't know. There's some one as deep as we at work to circumvent us, that's certain."

"We haven't the power to fight a man like the Earl of Glenmorgan. What is to be done?"

"We haven't the power, but we may have the cunning," said Madame La Grande, again refreshing herself, and apparently shaking off her despondency. "We must for the present watch and wait and devise."

"But this woman in the house. She'll be a spy upon us!"

"If she lives long enough," said the other, with her low, peculiar laugh. "But leave that to me."

At this moment a servant knocked at the door, and, upon being bidden, entered.

"Please, my lord," said he, "there's a rough-looking fellow in the hall, who demands to see your lordship at once."

"Demands? Have him whipped and cuffed into the street!"

"Ay, your lordship; but the footman tried that on and got a black eye for his pains."

"What!" exclaimed Falkland, purple with rage.

"Yet hold!" he added, a painful recollection seeming to change his temper. "Go below, and if you hear my bell ring, show the rascal up. If it does not ring in ten minutes, throw him into the street, and hand him over to the police."

"Heavens, Bella!" he exclaimed as the servant quitted the room; "it must be that ragged ruffian who accosted me at the fire!"

"Do you know him?"

"I can recall his features but indistinctly, though distinctly enough to fear him."

"Well?"

Falkland passed thoughtfully, and then started as though taken by a sudden resolve.

"Here!" he said, pulling out his purse and laying it on the table so that some of its contents were exposed to view; "give me that brooch and those earrings of yours to lay beside these coins, Bella. There! that will do! Now leave me alone while I ring the bell. If my suspicions prove correct—"

"I understand, and commend you," said Madame La Grande, and she quitted the room.

His lordship rang the bell.

A moment more, and a visitor was ushered in, and the door closed behind him.

It was the latterdemon, still hollow-eyed, but warmly and comfortably clad, something after the manner of a seafaring man.

"What is it? What do you want? What is your name, my man?" said his lordship, looking up impatiently from a book which he had been pretending to read.

"My name is George Grindle, my lord," said the man, with a peculiar expression of the eyes.

"Never heard the name before. But, now I remember, you are the ragged fellow to whom I gave the guinea. What more do you want?"

"Information about as how my poor brother, Jack Grindle, come to his death, my lord."

"How should I know?" exclaimed Falkland.

"They have told me as how he was hanged near Romney Marshes for the murder of the Baron of Falkland Towers," said the man, very slowly, and with quivering lips.

It was a large folio volume that Lord Falkland chanced to be reading, which enabled him to hide the pallor and agitation of his features, and when he removed it he had thoroughly regained his self-command.

"That man was certainly executed under another name than Grindle, and certainly could not have been your brother, my poor fellow," said he, assuming an air of commiseration.

"I ain't quite sure as to whether he was my brother or not, my lord," said the man; "so I be goin' to set about finding out about it."

"Very good; then what can you want of me?"

The companions of the latterdemon must have undergone a great change—probably at the instance of his benefactor, Captain Diggs—since the scene at the burning of the Princess's, for he answered, simply:

"Money to help on the investigation, my lord."

"Certainly," said his lordship; and, with a forced laugh, he tossed him a coin from the heap on the table.

The man suffered the piece to roll unheeded upon the floor, and gave a short, dry laugh.

"Pshaw! I want a thousand pounds," said he, grimly. "Do you suppose you can pay off a bad memory on me, Dick Strath?"

Before the word fell from his lips Lord Falkland struck him a violent blow on the temple, which nearly felled him, and then, clutching him by the throat, snapped a pistol at his temple, and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Help! murder! robbery! murder! help! help!"

But before he could recook his weapon, and while hurrying steps were heard in the passage-way without, George Grindle quietly pushed it aside, and said:

"There are two men on the opposite side of the street, with my sealed written statement in their pockets. Release me! Do!"

His lordship did so hastily, but, as the servants and Madame La Grande burst into the room, he had to explain a decidedly awkward position—himself pale and excited, with the pistol in his hand, and the rough-looking man coolly rearranging the sailor's knot of his neck-cloth.

"It is nothing!" stammered his lordship, turning from white to red. "This poor fellow, it seems, is subject to fits of insanity, and upon my examining my pistol carelessly he made quite an outcry."

"Indeed, my lord," said one of the servants, "I could have sworn it was your voice I heard."

A smart cuff on the ear was his reply; and his lordship was again left alone with his visitor.

"How much was it you said you wanted, my good Grindle?" said the former.

"One thousand pounds."

"That is a great deal of money, though. Why, it's a small fortune."

"I want to see how it feels to have a fortune, my lord," was the smiling reply.

"Then I suppose a thousand pounds will last you a long time, eh? Perhaps for a life-time."

"Oh, bless yer, no! Y, I has knowed cooves spend that much in a six months' racket. But I won't be so hard on you as that, my lord. There—no more

of that! Take your fin out of yer pocket, my lord; I don't keer about havin' that ere little trick tried on too often, you know."

His lordship laughed, and then going to his secretary, scratched out a cheque for the required amount, which he handed to George Grindle, and which the latter pocketed without a word.

But when he had backed to the door—a crab-like movement performed without taking his eye from the other—he said, with a look so full of latent hate and spite as to cause even his lordship to shudder:

"My lord, I hopes, for your sake, as how it won't turn out as the man as was scragged at Romney Marshes was my brother."

"And pray why so?"

"Because, my lord, if it should be as how he was my brother you'd better never been born!" was the sinister reply; and the speaker vanished.

When Madame La Grande next sought his lordship a few moments later she found him with his face buried in his hands and given up to the dearest despondency. A few words sufficed to explain the nature of his interview with Grindle; and nothing that she could say aroused him from his gloom.

"Oh, Bella, this is not the first time that I have been hunted down," he groaned. "But I fear that we are breaking up—I feel the shadows closing round me."

"Idiot!" she exclaimed; but the announcement that Captain Diggs was below caused them both to start.

"Here may be relief indeed!" cried Falkland, springing up and tossing off a glass of wine. "Diggs has promised me that this night shall be the last of Romney's fortune. Participate in my joy, Bella, for you also hate him as I do!"

### CHAPTER XXVII.

Look round, the wrecks of play behold,  
Estates dismembered, mortgaged, sold—  
Their owners, now to jails confined,  
Show equal poverty of mind.

*Gay.*

CAPTAIN DIGGS had a long conversation with Lord Falkland and Madame La Grande—almost immediately after the departure of George Grindle—during which he learned as much of the exciting events preceding his arrival at Falkland House as the conspirators deemed it advisable for him to know.

Although it was more than probable that he had a good deal to do with bringing about those events himself, he manifested much surprise and indignation at everything.

Referring to the unexpected intractability displayed by Florence, the captain said:

"Well, I suppose you had best let her go her own way for a few days, in order to drive suspicion out of her giddy head."

Madame La Grande smiled and said:

"Yes, mon capitaine; but I fear that she will not be easily ensnared with her new maid in the bargain. And this reminds me to ask that you will request your poison-brewing relative, Doctor Zipzack, to give me a call when you see him."

"Certainly," replied the captain, but somewhat faltering, and with a lengthening visage. "But you don't mean to say that poison is—is intended for—for the little girl?"

"You appear to have a good deal of feeling on the subject!" exclaimed the woman, with a sudden suspicion in her tone and glance.

"By George! is it any wonder that I should?" he cried, with a laugh. "Do you forget my share of the compact? In the event of his lordship giving up the girl, she was to be my property!"

"Your suspicion is entirely unfounded," said his lordship. "There is a certain interloper here—forced upon us by this peer—who may require some such delicate treatment. That is all."

"Oh! the deuce take interlopers!"

"I don't know," continued his lordship, darkly, "but that I have about concluded to give up my first intentions with respect to my little cousin. Through somebody's treachery she has had her eyes opened to all my plans, past and present; and I may have to resort to some grand coup to get rid of her. In that event you shall have her, captain."

The captain clasped his hands and rolled up his eyes in a manner so ludicrous that Madame La Grande burst into a laugh.

"Well," said Diggs, "you are to have some consolation for your little disappointments here, at any rate, for to-night we put the finishing touches upon the calf of Romney Manor."

"Ay, and I will be at the old man's side to enjoy my revenge!" cried La Grande, her eyes dilating with baleful light. "The blow will kill him, but I shall wring his heart to its last throbb!"

Diggs turned away, probably to hide an expression of disgust, and then signified his intention of going.

On the stairs Falkland, who had followed him



out, asked him if he was sure that Romney still considered his (Falkland's) professions of friendship as sincere.

"Without a doubt," said the captain. "Our original scheme of fleeing him will be adhered to. I have let him win considerably at *carté*, and this evening, elated by those successes, he will bring his all—ready money, bonds, mortgages—everything in the world. You are to be his 'friend' until the crowning moment—until I have everything in my possession, and then you can laugh at his snivels and squeals."

This last remark, made with cold-blooded exultation, was heard by Lady Florence, who chanced to be in the drawing-room with her new maid, and who cast a quick, apprehensive glance at Captain Diggs as he crossed the door in his passage through the hall. But a glance from him was sufficient to reassure her.

It had been previously agreed upon, or rather conceded, that *carté* should be the game by which Romney fondly hoped to regain the fortune and peace of mind he had so rashly squandered; the last time, should he be successful—and was he not sure of success?—he assured Lord Falkland, that he would ever handle cards or dice. His eyes would, indeed, have been opened had he heard the mocking merriment with which the conspirators heard his lordship repeat this virtuous resolution to amend his ways—after he had recovered back his money and estates.

The night so eagerly longed for by Romney and the confederates—by the would-be spoilers and their dupe—arrived. Beside the young squire there were only present Captain Diggs, his lordship, and about a dozen of the leading creatures of the latter—Fitz-Grammont, De Vavassour, Hugo Withers, and a few others.

Ralph was eager and excited; and the change that had come over his fresh young face in the few months of feverish dissipation in which he had indulged was most painfully apparent.

Diggs started the ball morrily by the relation of some of the most preposterous of his fictitious adventures in tiger-land, and the play commenced—Romney looking at and counting the bills and notes of the heavy stakes with an affectation of business tact and shrewdness which evoked many a laugh in the sleeve on the part of the confederates. Falkland stood at his side, affecting to give him the advice of his sager experience as a gamester. This the other player (Diggs) pretended to resent, and even got into a violent temper, but an appeal to the bystanders resulted in Falkland's favour, and of course only served to confirm Romney in his self-conceit.

At first the luck of the game was allowed to fluctuate considerably. Then Romney lost continuously—without pause or intermission. The stakes were doubled—trebled—quadrupled. His brain was on fire, and received constant and encouraging fuel from his lordship's serpent whisper at his elbow.

He played, or rather lost, with the recklessness of a madman. The face of Diggs was as immovable as adamant, as he raked in, one after another, the enormous stakes—bills, bonds, and Bank of England notes—by the bunch.

"All right!" cried Lord Falkland—the mask slipping from his visage, and the exultation of the born rascal glittering in his eyes. "All right! Keep the ball rolling! The faro is nearly played out!"

Romney only turned to look at him in a vacant, questioning way, then laughed foolishly, and the play was resumed.

The last stake—an enormous one—was played for.

Romney lost!

He sprang to his feet, death-pale, crushed, and the new light of how he had been duped bursting upon his brain; and a hoarse execration surged through his clenched teeth.

Diggs stuffed the great winnings into his pockets, and his lordship and his creatures roared with glee. "Paid off!" said Lord Fitz-Grammont.

"Scooped!" chuckled Hugo Withers.

"Cleaned out!" simpered Sir Plantagenet de Vavassour.

"Miscreant! traitor!" screamed the young squire, as if smitten with sudden frenzy, and springing at Falkland's throat. "Fiend that you are, you have undone me, destroyed me!"

"No doubt of it!" calmly and smilingly replied his lordship, shaking off his victim's grasp; "and I flatter myself it has been very effectually and artistically done. Snivelling will scarcely help you, my fine fellow!"

Ralph glared upon him in speechless agony and rage.

"Dupe! gull! puppet! idiot!" continued the taunting villain; "do you think I have forgotten that blow in my face in Falkland Park?—I meant to dupe you from the start! You've been a toy in the hands of my paid hirelings all along. Diggs himself has simply been a creature in my employ."

Ralph looked about him in a stupefied way, but with enough of rage lingering in his glance, as though he would willingly wreak it upon the captain. But Diggs had quitted the room.

"Ha! ha! you're looking for him, are you?" sneered Falkland. "He's our banker, as well as our chief actor, and will answer our drafts at sight, never fear! And hark you, my pretty little bumpkin, Romney Manor and Romney Park will be an appendage of Falkland Towers in a week, at a nominal price; I shall give shillings for them, instead of pounds. So go home to your papa and tell him the news!"

"Yes, to your parent, my cherub!" lisped De Vavassour.

"The dear old gentleman, by all means!" said Fitz-Grammont; and each of the remaining villains had his petty, malicious sting to administer in turn.

Romney was physically brave, however morally weak; and, in his present exasperated state, he would probably have flung himself upon them, like a wild beast at bay, had he not been so utterly crushed by remorse.

He seized his hat, and staggered out of the room. His brain seemed on fire, but, when he gained the fresh air of the street, a strange and desperate calmness succeeded to his fury.

He was about hailing a cab, when it occurred to him that he had not a shilling—nay, not a penny in the world.

The anguish of the young man at this cruel speech seemed to render him incapable of resenting it.

"My father! my poor old father!" he groaned, in accents of unutterable suffering; and he staggered back, and clasped his hands to his temples. "Ay, ay! go home to your governor," chimed in Hugo Withers, in mock-pitying tones.

In the new phase of his emotions this appeared to amuse him, and he leaned up against a lamp-post, and laughed hysterically. His calmness then returned to him. He walked rapidly through the cold, cheerless streets toward his lodgings. They were far away, in an aristocratic quarter of the great city, and a heavy fog and drizzling rain were prevailing; but he hailed them as a blessing, for the cold damp struck gratefully upon his brow.

Reaching the house where he lodged, the sleepy porter admitted him as usual.

"I suppose no one has called for me during my absence," said Romney, in a dreamy, absent way.

"Why, no, sir!" said the porter, in a surprise, which sprang from the lateness of the hour, but which the depressed imagination of the young gentleman supposed to be said in a sort of contempt that any one would be so foolish as to call upon a broken spendthrift like himself. "No, sir. The last as come in was the military gent who hired the rooms next to your own this morning."

Romney heeded not the answer, but passed up to the little smoking-room adjoining his bed-chamber.

A cheerful fire was blazing in the grate, shedding a bright and pleasant glow over everything.

"Pleasant enough, after the wet of my walk!" he muttered, dreamily.

He put away his hat and overcoat, and sat down at a little table in the centre of the room in deep thought, neglecting to close the door that led into the passage.

He then arose, took down a rosewood case from the bureau, and, opening it upon the little table, resumed his seat beside it. The rosewood case contained two small duelling pistols, elegantly mounted, with the means and implements of loading and cleaning them neatly arranged beside them.

He then drew from his breast a miniature of Lady Florence Falkland. It was not the face of the woman, but of the child—sweet, trusting, and beautiful—a keeppake of the happy past. For an instant his eyelids quivered, and a groan or a sob seemed trembling on his lips.

But it was only for an instant. He flung the locket aside, seized the pistol with the rapidity of thought, cocked it, and clapped the muzzle to his temple.

"Stop!" exclaimed a stern, commanding voice; and he tremblingly lowered the weapon.

The intruder was Captain Diggs.

"Ha!" shrieked the would-be suicide, springing to his feet, his late calmness quickly giving place to ungovernable fury; "I may taste of revenge before I die! Die, miscreant!"

He levelled the pistol, and pulled the trigger. There was no discharge, only the explosion of a percussion cap.

"I entered the room half an hour ago and drew the charges of both your pistols, Mr. Romney," said the captain, coolly.

"Then take 'em in your teeth, rascal, swindler!"

screamed the young man, who was evidently on the brink of insanity; and he raised the pistol above his head as if to hurl it.

Whether Diggs had the tiger-taming eye or not, he certainly had one which could hold and quell human fury.

"Stop!" he exclaimed, stretching out his hand. "Listen to me, sir," he added, as Romney, with a return of his fitful weakness which so rapidly alternated with his rage, sank upon his chair, with his head buried in his hands. "I shall convince you in five minutes that I am your friend—that I come to you now as your saviour, if you will only be calm enough to listen to me. Let me beseech you to be calm—in the name of your poor father, in whose behalf I am also here!"

"My father! Ay, my poor, poor father! It will break his heart!" groaned the miserable fellow, sobbing like a child.

"Listen to me calmly," said Diggs, speaking in those sharp, telling tones with which he had made Lady Florence familiar. "The villains whose society you have just quitted are after all the dupes—not you. With the exception of a few hundreds, every shilling that you have lost, every mortgage and bond that you have so blindly thrown away, is in my possession, and now lodged in the Bank of England to the temporary credit of a nobleman who knows your father and the secret, villainous plots under which you would have squandered your ancient estate; that is, all is banked with the exception of that which I won from you to-night—and that will be in company with the rest to-morrow. All shall be restored to you in proper time. Falkland is my foe, my bitter foe, and though he knows it not, I am hounding him down to the hangman's grip, if that be possible. I have but played a part, and Lady Florence knows me for your friend, as well as hers. You will be thoroughly convinced of it shortly. I ask but one condition—on oath before High Heaven!—and it must be given at once."

The young man had been listening to the man before him bewilderedly, hope, doubt and joy gathering upon his haggard face at each additional word.

"Name it, sir," he gasped.

"Swear to me, on your honour as an English gentleman, swear to me that you will never gamble again in the course of your life!"

"I swear!" exclaimed Ralph, speaking in a broken voice, but raising up his hand with impressive solemnity.

"Enough," cried Diggs, his features beaming with cheerfulness and benevolence. "Here," he added, drawing some money from his pocket, "here are a thousand pounds for pocket money. Your enemies (and mine) will endeavour to hasten the news of financial ruin to your father's ears. I shall endeavour to prevent them. In the meantime keep yourself away from your old haunts—keep the secret I have entrusted you with, and believe in me. I give you hope, Mr. Romney, and henceforth, let, come what may, your motto be, 'Lady Florence, happiness and fortune!'"

(To be continued.)

#### LIVE LIKE LOVERS.

MARRIED people should treat each other like lovers all their lives. Then they would be happy.

Bickering and quarrelling would soon break off love affairs; consequently lovers indulge in such things only to a very limited extent.

But some people—men and women both—when they have once got married, think they may do just as they please, and it will make no difference.

They make a great mistake. It will cause all the difference in the world.

Women should grow more devoted and men more fond after marriage, if they have the slightest idea of being happy as husbands and wives.

It is losing sight of this fundamental truth which leads to hundreds of divorces.

Yet many a man will scold his wife who would never think of breathing a harsh word to his sweetheart; and many a wife will be glum and morose on her husband's return who had only smiles and words of cheer for him when he was her suitor.

How can such people expect to be happy?

**A JAPANESE FUNERAL IN ENGLAND.**—A Japanese funeral took place in Sunderland a few days ago. It is believed to have been the first ceremony of the kind performed in this country. The deceased was fifteen months old, and son of Omotison Godie, a member of Tannaker's troupe of jugglers. Some singular rites were gone through in the presence of a large number of spectators.

**SNAIL EATING.**—The French sailors have introduced a new luxury. Garden snails, already prepared and cooked, are now being publicly sold in

the streets of Gloucester, and they appear to find ready customers. They are pronounced by local epicures to be a delicacy which cannot be too highly appreciated, and they are devoured with gusto. As French pickles people have eaten and relished them; but as what they are—why, some will object. They taste like the shank end of venison. Glass-blowers eat snails raw to strengthen their lungs and to enable them to blow stronger.

## LADY CHETWYND'S SPECTRE.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

THE suddenness of the old East Indian woman's attack upon her for an instant paralyzed the young Marchioness of Chetwynd.

Old Ragee had hurled himself upon the slender form of the girl with the impetuous fury of an enraged panther, and Bernice felt herself borne down almost to the earth by the sudden and insupportable burden.

With a quick, gasping, frightened cry, Bernice caught wildly at the nearest support, a slim young tree, and clung to it, while the old woman, clutching at her fiercely, hissed words of menace in her ears.

Bernice did not faint or shriek. The moment her brief stupefaction began to clear away she turned upon her assailant, fighting like a little tigress.

She was in a panic of mortal terror, and she struck out blindly, with all the energy of an utter desperation.

She speedily discovered that she was but as a child in the iron grasp of her assailant. Ragee's muscles were of steel.

A desperate fury animated the Hindoo woman.

She had the advantage, also, having not relaxed her first hold on Bernice, and the girl, panting and breathless, wild-eyed and trembling, stood still at last, and looked over her shoulder at her enemy with a wild and horrified gaze.

"Who is it?" she whispered, panting.

"It is I—old Ragee," hissed the Hindoo woman in the girl's ears.

The expression in Bernice's eyes deepened into amazement and terror.

She made another vain effort to free herself. Then she whispered:

"What do you want of me? What is the meaning of this assault?"

"Perhaps you think I don't know you," said the Hindoo woman, tauntingly. "It was I who dragged the shawl from your shoulders that night in the great house. I know you," and her tones grew fierce and hateful. "I know you, my lady. You were supposed to have died; you lay in state in your burial robes for six days; you were buried in the Chetwynd vault. And yet here you are alive! It is you and none other! It is you and not a ghost! It is you in the flesh—alive—strong—well. How happens this that you live who have been mourned as dead?"

The fierce, vindictive voice failed to kindle a spark of anger in Bernice's breast. Her heart throbbed with a keen pain. She was bewildered, dizzy, and still trembling.

She did not answer.

"Speak," cried the Hindoo woman, shaking her. "Do you deny that you are the Marchioness of Chetwynd?"

Bernice's oath prevented her declaring her identity. Not even to old Ragee could she confess herself the Marchioness of Chetwynd.

"Speak!" reiterated the old woman. "Speak, or I will drag you up to the great house, and into my lord's presence."

The Hindoo woman fancied, from the fact that Bernice had so far refrained from revealing herself to Lord Chetwynd, that she had some motive for keeping silent yet longer, and she believed that her threat would intimidate the young marchioness.

Yet she was not prepared for the actual terror her words inspired. Bernice uttered a moaning cry and grasped the old woman's arm in quick affright.

"No, no!" she cried. "I will not go there! What do you want of me?"

"You acknowledge that you are Lady Chetwynd?"

"No, I cannot acknowledge that."

"It isn't necessary. I know you. Who rescued you from your coffin?"

The girl shivered, and was silent.

"Was it Gilbert Monk?"

Still Bernice was dumb.

"I know it was. You do not say nay. It was Gilbert Monk who rescued you from your tomb," cried Ragee, with a strange mixture of anxiety and triumph. "What was the matter with you in your illness? How came he to rescue you?"

"Why do you ask me all these questions?" asked Bernice. "I cannot answer them. Let me go. Let me go, I say."

"By no means. I haven't begun to speak to you

yet," said the Hindoo, determined to ascertain precisely how much Bernice knew of the diabolical plot against her life, and thinking it possible that Gilbert Monk might have confided the truth to her. "Tell me—what was the matter with you in your illness?"

And again Bernice was silent.

The sudden call of a bird startled them both. They fancied that Lord Chetwynd was returning. They listened, but other sounds did not follow. The young marquis was not near.

"We are likely to be interrupted here," said Ragee. "Come with me. Don't hang back. I shall not hurt you."

She grasped Bernice's arm yet more tightly and hurried with her down the narrow path among the tremulous gleams of light and among the lurking shadows. Bernice did not resist, for resistance would have been useless.

The Hindoo hurried her forward with swift impatience. They plunged into portions of the park which Bernice had never visited. And at last they came out upon the border of a lovely little lake, formerly much used in winter by the Chetwynds and their guests as a skating-pond.

This lake was lower than the surface of the park, and was enclosed by high banks which were covered with stately trees. The borders of the lake were in shadow, but its centre lay in the full sheen of the moonlight, and looked like some great pallid pool.

There was upon one bank of the lake a small overhanging chalet of the Swiss order of architecture, which had been built for the use of skaters in winter. Its lower storey opened directly upon the lake, and was warmed in time of use by a little German porcelain stove. Its upper storey, reached upon the landward side by a flight of stairs, was provided with a great wide balcony across its entire front, where spectators had been wont to sit to view the skaters.

Old Ragee half led, half dragged her victim up the long airy flight of outside stairs to the upper balcony of the chalet. The roof was wide and protecting and the balcony lay in deep shadow. The Hindoo hurried Bernice along in the gloom to the door that opened into the upper room, and there halted. There were rustic chairs and sofas in profusion upon the wide balcony. Ragee seated her captive upon a sofa and sat down beside her, keeping a close hold upon her.

They were upon the water side of the building, and the entire structure concealed them from view from the direction whence they had come. The lake lay before them, and was under their very balcony, and beyond were the dark and wooded shores also belonging to the park. Ragee shot a keen glance into those distant shadows, and then, convinced that in the deep shade of the overhanging roof she could not be seen even from the lake, she turned again to her young captive.

"We are here alone," she said, in a voice that thrilled Bernice with a strange terror. "Alone, my lady! Do you comprehend?"

"Yes," faltered Bernice. "We are alone."

"Are you afraid?"

"No. Why should I be? But it is all so strange. Let me go, Ragee. Oh, let me go!"

"There! you have confessed, in uttering my name, that you are Lady Chetwynd. Now I ask you again, and I ask it for the last time, what was the matter with you in your illness?"

"If you were to ask me these questions all night," said Bernice, "I still could not answer you. You are but wasting time on me."

"I suppose," Ragee said, roughly, "that you are bound by some oath, my lady. What are you doing at Chetwynd Park playing ghost? You have changed—grown beautiful too, I suppose; but what will your beauty avail you? Perhaps you think to win back your former husband. You might as well try to win back your lost babyhood. Lord Chetwynd is greatly annoyed at the appearance of your supposed apparition. He threatens to leave the park if he continues to be haunted. He says that he is justly punished for having married through a short-lived fancy, but that as he was a good husband to you you should not now molest him. He says that he never suffered you to know how bitterly he repented his marriage."

"Did he tell you this?" demanded Bernice, haughtily, yet with a voice quivering with pain.

"No, he told my young mistress. She was his first love, you know. He was betrothed to her at his mother's death-bed. He is again betrothed to her. He loves her with all his soul. I'm sorry for you, my lady, but for the sake of others I must tell you the truth. Lord Chetwynd don't want you back. He is happy with his first love, and she adores him. You will come back to a home where you have long ceased to be missed, and where you are not wanted. Your return to life and home will create more misery than your supposed death."

Every word of this speech pierced to Bernice's very soul, yet she did not cry nor moan. The words

were but a repetition of those with which Gilbert Monk had so cruelly stabbed her. It was as he had said—her place was filled, and she was forgotten.

The girl arose—Ragee loosening her grip upon her—and walked unsteadily to the low railing of the balcony and leaned upon it. She was too weak to attempt an escape, and, moreover, Ragee was between her and the staircase. But Bernice, having no fear of personal injury, had no thought at that moment of flight. She would be alone with her anguish. The near presence of the East Indian woman suffocated her. Her brain was in a whirl, her soul in a strange tumult. She tried to think, but her powers seemed benumbed and refused to obey her will.

She looked upon the broad sheen of moonlit waters with eyes that saw nothing. There was a strange ringing in her ears. Her eyeballs were hot, and seemed to burn the lids that drooped over them.

The old woman watched her some moments with a singular gleam in her eyes and a look of hatred so intense that it was odd the girl could not feel it. Then Ragee arose silently and crept across the balcony toward the girl with the stealthiness of a cat, her talon-like fingers crooked and extended, and her face distorted with an expression of murderous fury.

Arrived within some three or four feet of Bernice, the old Hindoo woman paused, and gathered together her still supple figure for a spring. And then, with the bound of a wild beast, and an inarticulate cry on her lips, old Ragee hurled herself forward upon the slender girl, caught her up in her arms, and flung her over the balcony into the waters of the lake.

Bernice's scream and her splash in the cold waters were simultaneous.

Old Ragee leaned upon the balcony, and looked over in the darkness. She knew that the water was deep at that point, and that the girl was likely to drown. She was not prepared for the sight that met her eyes. Bernice was striking out with one arm feebly, but with the skill of a swimmer, for a distant point of the shore. The girl's instincts warned her to avoid the banks adjacent to the chalet, where her enemy would be likely to prevent her landing.

The old woman muttered an imprecation in her native tongue.

"She can swim like a fish," she muttered. "I had forgotten that she was taught to row and swim and sail a boat at St. Kilda. She strikes out for the deeper water. She means to lead at that jungle-like point yonder. What courage! What coolness! She'll outwit me yet. Ah, she begins to flag. She uses but one arm in swimming—way is that? She must have struck the other on that pile of stones just under the surface of the water—the pile which forms the foundation of the little pier his lordship planned. Perhaps her arm is broken. She stops. She is hurt, or chilled, or has a cramp!"

She was right. Bernice had ceased to exert herself. She floated on the water as if helpless, and then threw up one arm wildly. The next moment, with a wild scream, Bernice sank slowly in the dark waters, which closed above her.

With a horrible laugh on her shrivelled lips the old Hindoo woman fitted down the steps of the balcony and plunged into the shadows of the park, taking a homeward direction and leaving Bernice to her fate!

### CHAPTER XXXII.

IT was the day after Lady Fortescue's party—some two or three weeks previous to the events last narrated.

Lady Diana Northwick stood at one of the broad plate-glass French windows of her own drawing-room, in her stately house at South Audley Street, looking out idly, yet with an expectancy unknown to herself.

Before the bright hearth stood her lover, to whom she was said to be betrothed—Lord Tentamour. His lordship's florid face was flushed; his pale blue eyes had a sparkle of anger in them, and he pulled viciously with one jewelled hand at his long reddish whiskers. He was evidently irritated and annoyed. One might have deemed that the noble pair had been quarrelling, but for the quiet impassiveness of the lady's cold and haughty face, and the expression of weariness in her magnificent azure eyes.

At this moment a tall footman ushered into the drawing-room the great Tartar explorer, Basil Tempest.

Mr. Tempest came in, grave and courteous, his dark, stern face wearing its usual commanding expression, and his cool, keen eyes taking in the discomfort of Tentamour's situation at a glance.

He was conscious, even before a word had been spoken, that Lady Diana and Tentamour had quarrelled, but he gave no sign in his manner of his discovery.



Lady Diana greeted him with a smile that stung Tentamour as a covert insult to himself.

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Tempest," said the lady, with charming courtesy, giving her hand to the explorer. "It is pleasant to find that among so many claimants upon your attention you have not forgotten me."

Tempest made a pleasant response, and then exchanged greetings with Lord Tentamour. The two gentlemen did not shake hands, but they exchanged glances of dislike, and were from that moment enemies.

Lady Diana won the explorer to speak of himself and his adventures, which he did with modest ease and grace.

Lord Tentamour listened with a perceptible sneer.

"Do you know," said Lady Diana, reflectively, "I admire excessively all this daring, this disregard of luxuries and comforts, this devotion to science, but I fear I have not to me the material of which explorers are made. After one of those long ten-hour rides which you describe, through a drizzling rain, I should long for a warm fireside, and refuse to be comforted with a bed on the hard ground. And, although I am not very fond of my kind, I still should prefer to see now and then an English face instead of those round Mongolian faces."

"I never experienced a desire to see an English face," remarked Tempest. "In truth, I was not likely to meet many of them in northern China or thereabouts. The British traveller, as a rule, clings to the well-beaten routes. I had been away from England for a score of years, more or less, and in all that time I scarcely met with one of my countrymen. I avoided them on my return to England, being something of a misanthrope, but in my very avoidance of them I fell in with one upon a steamer in which I sailed from Genoa to Marseilles, and I felt drawn to him as if he had been my own son. He was a noble young fellow, as fair as a girl naturally, but his face was bronzed by Eastern suns. His eyes were blue—as blue as your own, Lady Diana. He looked delicate, yet I do not doubt his slender frame was strong as steel. He had the soul of a lion in his light and supple frame. He was a marquis, although so young. His name was Lord Chetwynd. Do you know him?"

"I know his mother," said Lady Diana. "Lady Chetwynd married a swarthy Indian colonel who was poor, and had two children by a wife he married and who died in India. They say that the first Mrs. Monk was a half-caste, and I think the story may be true, for Miss Monk is swarthy and has an East Indian look. Lady Chetwynd became Lady Barbara Monk—all for love, as the song says. This young Lord Chetwynd made a romantic marriage, and his wife died soon afterwards. He is now betrothed again to Miss Monk, to whom he was once before betrothed."

"He told me that his wife was dead, but I should not judge, from his manner of speaking of her ladyship, that he was likely to marry again," said Tempest.

"Miss Monk was his first love and his mother's choice," said Lady Diana. "Miss Monk is well connected on her father's side, and is very beautiful. She will make a great sensation in London society. Lord Chetwynd might do better—but then he has done worse."

"Was not the first Lady Chetwynd a suitable wife for him?" asked Tempest. "I am greatly interested in Chetwynd, and would like to know something more about him."

"There is nothing to know except as regards his marriage," said Lady Diana. "He is worthy of his name and rank, and fonder of benefiting his tenants and the struggling poor than of dancing at balls. He is a warm-hearted, impulsive, noble young fellow, full of enthusiastic schemes for benefiting his race. He was nearly heart-broken when he lost his wife. The marriage was a misalliance. He was engaged to Miss Monk, and they had a lovers' quarrel, and he went away in his yacht to Norway and the Hebridean group of islands, and in a fit of pique at Miss Monk married a low-born, uneducated, plain little island girl. It was a freak of madness. The girl was the child of fishers, who had been adopted by the island pastor and educated as a lady. There was not a gentleman's family on the island except the minister's. And Lord Chetwynd brought that child—she was only sixteen or seventeen—to reign as mistress of Chetwynd Park. The grandeur of her new position overwhelmed the young island girl, and she died some two months after her advent in England."

"A sad story," said Tempest. "It was not well to transplant into a hot-house the hardy flower that has always braved the storms and snows and is hardened to them."

"Not always," assented Lady Diana. "The girl did wonderfully well as Lady Chetwynd. Lady Welby tells me that she was the impersonation of

grace, and that although she was not beautiful she had a rich dower of genius. Her manners were charming. In short, Lady Chetwynd, with all her shortcomings, was a wonderful young creature, the more to be admired when one reflects that the island of St. Kilda is a mere rock, inhabited by a rude and ignorant peasantry."

Mr. Tempest's face grew suddenly white.

"What island did you say, Lady Diana?" he asked, eagerly.

"St. Kilda—a bit of rock some two miles by three, with mountain peaks and a village on the little bay. The island is not well known."

"The story interests me strangely," said Mr. Tempest, in a voice that had suddenly grown husky.

"Such romantic marriages are rare; and, besides, Lord Chetwynd is my friend. What was her name?" asked the explorer.

"Bernice Gwellan. Odd, is it not?"

Mr. Tempest averted his face, and did not answer. It required all his stern and powerful will to command his emotions at that moment. He commanded himself, however, with a will that seemed of iron.

And although his face was pale, and his black eyes strangely sombre, yet his tone was careless as he said, in his usual voice:

"The story is very entertaining. Its beauty is spoiled by the fact of Lord Chetwynd's expected second marriage. But perhaps that is well. He is young, and Miss Monk was you say his first love. I will take a run down to Chetwynd Park after a few days, and see my fellow-traveller."

"Shall you go back to Tartary in a month, Mr. Tempest?" asked Lady Diana. "If you answer in the affirmative, I shall think London has lost all its attractions."

"I may stay longer than I at first intended," replied the explorer. "My plans are not yet settled. I begin to fear," and he directed an admiring look toward her ladyship, "that London—or South Audley Street—has too many attractions for me, and will hold me here when I should be gone."

Lord Tentamour looked displeased.

Tempest prolonged his call to the limits of propriety, and then arose to take leave. Other guests arriving at the moment, nothing remained for Lord Tentamour but to depart with his rival.

Lady Diana invited the explorer to call again, and Tempest noticed that her betrothal ring, which he had observed on the previous night, was absent from her finger. This fact, added to Tentamour's silence and suppressed anger, convinced him that the engagement between the noble pair had been broken that very day. He laid up the fact for future use, and bade her good morning with an impression that seemed to indicate an extreme admiration.

The rivals—for Lord Tentamour saw in Tempest an actual rival—emerged from the house together. At the foot of the steps they halted on the pavement. Tempest raised his hat in adieu, but Lord Tentamour detained him.

"How long are you likely to be in England, sir?" inquired his lordship.

"It is impossible to say, my lord. I intended to return to China within a month. As I feel now I may never go back."

"You have come to this decision since you entered Lady Diana Northwick's house this afternoon; is it not so?"

"Your astuteness does you credit, my lord. It is so."

Lord Tentamour's face deepened in its sullen flash of rage.

"Am I to understand that you are one of Lady Diana's numerous victims?" he sneered. "Are you, like so many others, striving to win the rich young widow?"

"The lists are open to all," said Tempest, quietly. "I conclude that no engagement of marriage exists between you and Lady Diana, since I saw no betrothal ring to-day upon her finger. And if she is not bound by any ties I shall seek to win her. I am frank with you. I admire Lady Diana. If I can win her I will marry her. Let her choose between us, my lord. If she prefers you, it will be all right and I'll go back to Tartary. If she loves me I shall regard myself as a fortunate man, and shall marry her before the summer is over. A clear field is all I ask."

"You are cool," said Tentamour, with a scowl. "The lady is my promised wife. I forbid your attentions to her."

"No one can forbid them but the lady herself. If she asserts that they are unwelcome, or that she prefers to marry you, I will retire as gracefully as may be. But the fact stands, my lord. You and I are rivals, and I shall marry Lady Diana Northwick if I can."

He bowed courteously to the enraged lord and passed on.

(To be continued.)

LAZINESS.—Laziness is a bad disease, and, like many other kinds, is often self-imposed. In the

case of many individuals it is an inherited malady, and consequently hard to oust from the system. But it is oftener the case that this disgusting distemper is brought on persons by their own deliberate selfishness—by a vastly discreditable disposition to shirk the inevitable burdens incident to living a decent life. Laziness of this kind is one of the cardinal sins, and should subject the obnoxious offender to the discipline of the treadmill. More particularly is laziness offensive in the young and healthy. To learn to work, and work cheerfully, is the central lesson of life. Begin to learn it early—eschew laziness as the most disgusting of all faults, and one that will surely end in hopeless misery, for, depend upon it, none can be so insensible through laziness as to be, in the end, incapable of suffering. Nature is, in the event of a non-payment of her demands, a stern and merciless creditor. Therefore, boys and girls, off with jackets and superabundant crinolines, and keep square your account with her.

## THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL.

THE parlour windows were open to let in the cool, soft breezes that were blowing.

Outside, in the shadow of the honeysuckles, jasmine and wild ivy, that overran one end of the long verandah, stood Madeline Vaughan and her lover, Horace Selwyn. It was not their fault that the words spoken on the other side of the windows were perfectly audible.

"Rose," said a man's musical voice, a little sharply, "where is your mistress?"

"Please, sir," answered the maid, "I do not know."

"I believe you do know," broke in a shrill treble, angrily; "only you are too stupid and stubborn to tell."

"Hush, Madam Leroy. You will distress poor Rose. I am sure she has spoken the truth concerning my niece."

"Indeed I have, sir."

"Bah!" sputtered the shrill voice. "It does not matter, after all. I know better than that poor little fool, that is if she has spoken the truth."

"You, madam? Why, you do not know Madeline at all."

There was a short laugh, and then the disagreeable voice made answer:

"As if I could mistake a Vaughan when I see one! I have good cause to remember them, Cyril, as you, being one of the race yourself, should know full well."

"Hush!" he said, angrily.

"Very well. I will hush. But I have not told you where I saw this girl with the eyes and hair and handsome face of the Vaughans."

"No."

"In the garden, as I passed through it half an hour ago."

"Oh, of course."

"She did not see me, and for a very good reason."

"What do you mean?"

"She was too deeply absorbed in somebody else—a handsome young fellow, who seemed equally blind to what was transpiring around him."

There was something jeering and malignant in that shrill, high-pitched voice as it gave utterance to these words.

"Selwyn!" hissed the man.

There was a moment's silence. He broke it by saying, sharply:

"This must not go on. Rose, go for your mistress. Tell her I must see her at once."

"Yes, sir."

Then all was still. Madeline looked up quickly, and found Horace Selwyn's eyes fixed upon her face in a keen look.

"You heard what they were saying?" he whispered.

Madeline nodded, and looked a little pale.

"I don't like this Cyril Vaughan, if he is your uncle. There is something sly and subtle about him."

"Oh, Horace, don't say that."

"But it is the truth, my dear. I can't help distrusting him. I wish you were safely away from him."

"He is my guardian, you know."

"Yes, more's the pity," and he heaved a deep sigh.

At this moment Rose came up to them and delivered Mr. Vaughan's message.

"I'm going in with you," said Horace, suddenly.

"I might as well speak to Mr. Vaughan at once. He must be told of our hopes and wishes."

"Yes, yes."

She shivered a little, and wondered why she felt such a chill foreboding of a sudden. Would she rather he did not speak to her uncle? No, it was not that. Cyril Vaughan ought to be told. She



[“ROSE, GO FOR YOUR MISTRESS.”]

had been under his roof for three weeks already, and not a word had been said to him of her attachment for Horace Selwyn.

The guardianship, please understand, was not two years old. But Madeline had spent those two years at boarding-school, and therefore had seen very little of her uncle until within the last three weeks.

She tried to like him, and thought she did. But that did not prevent the nervous tremor with which she now thought of approaching him.

Horace pressed her hand reassuringly once or twice as they wended their way into the wide hall. I think he must have guessed what thoughts were flitting through her mind.

He tapped lightly on the drawing-room door, and then went in, still leading Madeline by the hand.

A little pale-faced man in dressing-gown and slippers was seated in an easy-chair by one of the windows. He must have been past fifty, his hair was gray, and a few wrinkles could be traced in his high forehead. His face had been a very handsome one once, but now the only remnant of its past beauty was a pair of remarkably keen black eyes.

An odd little yellow-faced woman stood before him—a woman dressed in plain black from head to foot. She had a funny, wasp-like face, with bronze-coloured eyes, and an underhung lip not at all prepossessing.

At the sound of the unclosing door the pale little gentleman looked up, started, and changed colour visibly.

“Mr. Selwyn!” he exclaimed, holding out his hand reluctantly, while a half-sarcastic smile curled his lip. “Really, this is an unexpected pleasure.”

Horace felt the sneer the words were intended to convey. He saw the horrible old woman grin and nod her head slightly in Mr. Vaughan’s direction as a sign of approval.

Nothing daunted, the young man walked straight up to his host, and said, in a low voice:

“I came to beg a private interview with you, sir. I hope you will grant it.”

Mr. Vaughan lifted his eyebrows and shifted uneasily in his seat.

“Certainly, sir,” he answered, reluctantly, “if you insist upon it.”

“I do.”

“Very well. Pray be seated, Mr. Selwyn.”

Then he turned to Madeline, who still lingered in the doorway, gazing about her in no little trepidation. His whole expression changed in an instant. He was bland, smiling, courteous.

“Come in, my dear,” he said.

Madeline advanced. Her gaze was wandering from her uncle’s bland face to the odd, elfish countenance of the strange woman. She seemed perplexed.

Mr. Vaughan read the glance she gave him, and laughed softly.

“I have a surprise in store for you, my dear,” he said. “Pray let me present you to Madam Leroy. Madam Leroy, this is my niece, Madeline Vaughan.”

Madeline extended her hands, smiling very faintly.

“This lady is to be a member of our family for the present,” continued Mr. Vaughan. “This is the surprise I had prepared for you. Madam Leroy will remain here as your governess.”

“Governess?”

Madeline stared, and Horace began to laugh. He could not help it; the idea of presenting an old woman like that for the girl’s governess seemed so ridiculous.

Mr. Vaughan coloured resentfully. He clasped and unclasped his supple hands slowly, as if ruminating with himself.

“Perhaps I employed the wrong word,” he ven-

tured, after a pause. “I should have said companion. Madam Leroy will be your companion.”

“Yes, uncle,” returned Madeline, meekly.

“It seemed the only thing to be done,” he went on. “A crusty old bachelor like myself could scarcely expect to make a place pleasant for a young girl like you without calling in foreign aid. Besides, it was scarcely proper to keep you here without a companion of your own sex. You comprehend my motives?”

“Yes, uncle,” she answered, again. But she wondered vaguely why he had chosen Madam Leroy for such a purpose.

“I trust you are pleased?” he continued, darting her a keen look.

“I’m sure I ought to be pleased and grateful,” she faltered.

“Of course. Now take Madam Leroy away with you, my dear. Mr. Selwyn and I have a word to say to each other in private.”

He waved his hand towards the door. Madeline’s eyes met those of her lover in a half-terrified appealing look for an instant, then she went away.

She paused by the hall window, heaving a deep sigh of uneasiness. She was worse frightened than she would have cared to acknowledge. She had not asked that horrible woman to follow her, or even waited to see whether she would do so or not. What did her presence in the house mean?

She had scarcely asked herself the question when a rustling noise became audible, and madam herself came up to her.

“I hope we are going to be very good friends, child,” she said.

Madeline shivered and answered, faintly:

“I hope so, indeed.”

“I’m sure to like you, my dear, you are so very charming,” and she tapped the girl’s soft cheeks with her bony fingers. “You are rosy and dimpled as a baby. And such eyes and hair! the real Vaughan hair. You’re a beauty, Miss Madeline, and no mistake. Great heavens! what heart-breaking there will be when you are once in society.”

The grimace which accompanied these words was frightful. Madeline felt more disgusted and repelled than ever by this fulsome flattery and the woman’s looks and manner.

“I don’t like society,” she said, a little sharply.

“Don’t indeed! Bah! what a strange child you are. Very strange indeed. But I’ll understand you better by-and-by.”

“I hope so.”

“Of course. And I’ll teach you all I know, and you shall tell me all about your lovers, and all that sort of thing, my dear. You might begin by telling me about this one who is closeted with your uncle at this present moment.”

“I don’t understand you, Madam Leroy. And I wish you would not speak to me in that manner.”

Madam laughed an ugly dry laugh, and ran after her, saying:

“There, there! Don’t be offended. You are such a beauty I knew you must have lovers. And where is the harm, I’d like to know, in speaking of them?”

Madam looked baffled, and more than half angry. Madeline threw off the detaining hand she had dropped on her arm, shuddering involuntarily the while.

“Please excuse me,” she said, coldly. “You can ring the bell—you see the bell-rope yonder—and Rose will show you to your room, and offer all the little services you may require.”

She did not wait for an answer, but ran swiftly upstairs, glancing backward only once.

Then Madam Leroy was glaring after her in a dreadful manner from the hall below.

Almost ready to cry, she darted into her own chamber, slammed the door, and dropped breathless into the nearest seat.

She could not have told why she felt so frightened and hysterical. Nothing very alarming had happened. Madam Leroy was odd and whimsical, her uncle a very eccentric man, and there the whole matter began and ended.

Why, then, did she feel like a person standing on the verge of an abyss from which escape is uncertain? Why did she tremble so, and grow sick at heart?

“Madam is right,” she thought, at last. “I have no occasion to distress myself in this manner.”

She resolutely called back the colour to her cheeks again. After a little while she sat up and listened. Half an hour may have elapsed when she heard the drawing-room door open and Horace prepare to take his departure.

She ran down to him to say one last word before he went away. There was nobody else in the hall, so she flew into his arms, and rested her head on his shoulder, like some poor, frightened creature seeking a refuge.

“What did Uncle Cyril say to you?” she cried, in an eager whisper.

He looked pale, and seemed agitated, but he stooped and gently kissed her.



"He would give me no answer, Madeline. He said I must wait—that you were too young to know your own mind, and all that sort of thing."

"You told him everything?"

"Yes. But he is implacable—determined. He sneered at our love as the idle fancy of two children. He says we shall laugh at it ourselves some day."

"Never!"

"And so I told him," he said, a bright flash coming into his handsome eyes. "But he pretends to be very solicitous for your happiness and future welfare. He says you shall not be left to make the terrible mistake of a mésalliance, as so many girls have done before you."

She caught her breath sharply, and was silent for a moment.

"What else did he say, Horace?"

"He proposed that we should thoroughly test our regard for each other by neither meeting nor writing to each other for the next six months. You will then be of age, and can act your own pleasure."

"And you consented?"

"No," he said, shaking his head sadly. "I only submitted to circumstances. The power is all in his hands at present. I did not wish to make of him an enemy. Six months is not so very long, my darling. I am sure of your faith and you can be sure of mine. We can afford to wait a little for our happiness."

He tried to speak bravely, but his voice shook in spite of himself.

Madeline glanced quickly into his face. She saw lines of pain there that had escaped her previous observation.

How very pale he was.

She knew by these signs that he had passed through a distressing interview with her uncle, but was endeavouring to hide his pain and forebodings from her.

"Horace, my brave, true Horace!" she cried, clinging closely to him in love and admiration.

He gently released himself.

Footsteps sounded in the other end of the hall. Somebody was coming that way.

"Courage," he whispered. "I must go. Though we do not meet as of old, I will be near enough to watch over you. Remember that, my darling, and fear nothing. Our love shall stand the test by which this foolish old man would shake it."

"It shall always stand," she answered him back, with crimson cheeks.

"Yes, darling. If anything should happen, and you should need me very much"—here his face grew grave and cold, and he glanced uneasily up the hall—"you must send word to me. That will be enough for breaking through the conditions your uncle would impose on us. You will do so?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, Madeline. I shall wait for your summons. When it comes it will bring me to your side, though ten thousand dragons were to bar the way between us."

There was no time to say more. The footsteps were alarmingly near now. Horace turned, gave her one long, lingering look, then went swiftly out at the hall door and down the steps.

Of course it was Madame Leroy who approached. It did not need that low, chuckling laugh to tell Madeline who was playing the spy on her movements.

"You aly creature!" cried madam, as she came rustling up to the trembling girl's side. "Lovers, indeed! I shall keep an eye on you in future, miss. Be sure of that."

With this horrible attempt at playfulness she passed on. Madeline saw no more of her that day. The next morning, after she had eaten a solitary breakfast in her own chamber, with good-natured Rose to wait upon her, there came a message from her uncle.

"Would she be so kind as to take Madam Leroy out for a walk, and show her somewhat of the scenery?"

It would not be polite to send back a refusal, so she donned her wraps as quickly as possible.

In the lower hall madam waited, thoroughly equipped. She greeted Madeline with a sweeping courtesy that seemed to have more of mockery than reverence in it.

"It's a delightful morning for walking," she said, grinning; "too delightful to remain cooped up in the house. Don't you think so, my dear?"

Madeline faltered something about the fresh air and cheering sunshine.

"Yes, yes," interrupted madam, shrugging her shoulders. "I understand all that. Come, my dear, give me your hand."

It was reluctantly offered, and so, side by side, they set out, taking a path that led across the fields.

Madeline soon became aware that her companion was actually leading the way, though without acknowledging such to be the case. She chatted in-

cessantly about the woods and hills and winding river in the distance, but Madeline could not help thinking she was perfectly familiar with these objects, and knew more of the very path they were at that moment threading than she could have told her.

Suddenly there was a pause. Madam had gone into ecstasies over some scarlet flowers growing half way up a high bank near the path.

"Such beauties!" she cried. "And I do not give to possess them?"

She gave Madeline's hand a squeeze that nearly crushed the delicate fingers lingering unwillingly in her clasp, then pushed her a few steps in advance.

"The bank is not very steep," said Madeline, glad of any excuse to get away from the clutch of those bony fingers for a few minutes. "I think I can get the flowers."

"Don't! You shan't!" screamed madam.

She darted forward, but Madeline was already ascending the bank, and the old woman could only draw back and watch her from the path, with twinkling gray eyes that had an evil light dancing in them just at that moment.

Madeline reached the flowers, and, steadying herself by means of a swaying vine that clung to the naked rock above, she stooped to gather them. A shrill, terrified scream from Madam Leroy startled her at this critical juncture. She lost her footing, the vine gave way, and she would have tumbled headlong into the path below had not somebody darted up the bank like a flash, and a pair of strong arms seized her and borne her to the grassy leve below.

Madeline felt a hot breath on her cheek, the almost suffocating pressure of the arms that had rescued her, and then, as if by magic, she was reclining safe and uninjured at madam's feet.

"Oh, you foolish child!" shrieked the woman. "You might have tumbled."

"But she'd nothing of the sort," said a heavy but musical voice.

"No, thanks to you, sir. Madeline, you owe your fortunate escape to this kind gentleman."

Madeline looked up with a bewildered air. She saw a heavily built, florid young fellow, somewhat showily dressed, leaning against the nearest tree trunk, earnestly regarding her.

"I'm sure I am very grateful," she faltered.

"You have need to be. It was quite providential that this gentleman chanced to be so near at hand."

Was it imagination—or did a glance of intelligence pass between the two? Madeline could not tell; but she rose up with flushed cheeks, and held out one of her hands, in which a tiny scarlet blossom, sadly crushed, lay, and said:

"Here is the only trophy I secured. Please accept it, madam."

Her cool tone, the change that had come over her so suddenly, seemed to startle the woman. With another quick glance into the young fellow's face, as if seeking direction, she turned to Madeline, snatched up the flower, and flung it from her.

"Bah!" she cried, with a shiver. "I hate the flaunting thing now! Red—the colour of blood—and it might have been your blood, my dear! I can't bear the sight of it. Ugh! Why did you offer it to me?"

Madeline changed colour, but did not answer.

"I hope you were not hurt, miss?" said the man.

"No—only frightened. I hope I need say no more to assure you how grateful I am for your timely help?"

"No, miss. Besides, it was only a pleasure to be of service to you."

He spoke politely enough, but there was something in his manner that filled Madeline with uneasiness. She recoiled a few steps and looked at madam.

"I'm going back," she said. "I've walked far enough this morning."

"Oh, to be sure," returned madam, following her, and at the same time throwing a significant glance over her shoulder. "Of course you are not fit to go on after the accident that has happened. We'll return to the house."

Obedient the mute signal she had given, the man strode forward, placed himself at madam's left, and began to walk on with them.

"I hope my company is acceptable?" he said, thrusting forward his head to give Madeline an admiring look.

"Very acceptable," answered madam, speaking up quickly. "We cannot forget what we owe to you. Can we, dear child?"

She grinned at Madeline, who bit her lip and averted her face, feeling very much puzzled and frightened.

"I suppose I must introduce myself," the man went on, in his coarse but good-natured way. "My name is Stephen Hargrave. Here is my card."

He thrust forward a piece of pasteboard, which Madeline affected not to see, and which madam was compelled to take herself.

"You must go with us to the house," said the latter, beaming upon him most graciously. "I shall take pleasure in presenting you to Mr. Vaughan, and mentioning the service you have rendered his charming niece."

Mr. Hargrave looked a little confused, and muttered some reply that did not reach Madeline's ear.

Madam and Mr. Hargrave had the conversation all to themselves. Madeline kept pace with them, but she was pale and silent. When they reached the house she prepared to leave them somewhat abruptly, but madam held her back.

"You've made another conquest," she whispered, sharply, with an ugly laugh. "What a sly little puss you are! This handsome stranger is desperately in love with you already. Anybody with half an eye could see that. How romantic. Fortunate child! I'll speak a good word in your uncle's ear, be sure of that."

"You needn't take the trouble," cried Madeline, and fled precipitately.

She saw madam and Mr. Hargrave enter her uncle's study. A loud laugh sounded within. A man's voice said "a good joke;" and somebody answered "wasn't it?"

Madeline heard no more. She ran upstairs, wondering what it could all mean. Had that meeting with Mr. Hargrave been a prearranged affair—and did her Uncle Cyril and madam know him—and were they withholding the fact from her for some secret purpose?

After a little hesitation she rang for Rose, and began to question her.

"Did you ever see Madam Leroy before yesterday?" she asked.

Rose shook her head with a grimace.

"I can't say I was glad to see her then, miss," she added. "Between you and me, I don't like her any too well. She's sly and cunning as an old fox."

"You should not speak of her in that manner, Rose."

"I can't help it, miss," the maid asserted, stoutly. "It does no harm to speak one's mind now and then. I'd rather speak it in some other house than this though."

She added this last in a whisper. Madeline started and grew very pale.

"Hush!" Then after a moment's silence she said, suddenly, "Did you ever hear of Mr. Hargrave Rose? Is he an old friend of my uncle's?"

"I don't know, miss. No, I never heard of him. But I am new to the place, you will remember. I came only a day or two before you."

"Oh, yes."

Madeline sighed, and drew back wearily. She felt how wrong it was to question a servant, and yet she had been unable to resist the impulse.

An hour later Madam Leroy herself tapped at the door, flushed and smiling.

"Good news, my dear child," she cried, hastening into the room. "The two gentlemen have taken a wonderful liking to each other already. Your uncle has invited Mr. Hargrave to remain in the house as his guest."

Madeline started and stared blankly into that odd, distorted face.

"Impossible!"

"It's true, miss."

"Mr. Hargrave did not accept the invitation?"

"He did. What man in his senses would have rejected such a chance to remain under the same roof with his inamorata? Oh, you foolish child! You should have known what Mr. Hargrave would do."

Madeline turned away quite sick at heart. She was feeling more and more deeply convinced that some plot was under consideration, of which she was the intended victim.

Had money anything to do with it?

She was rich and her uncle was comparatively poor, and, she had heard it said, deeply involved.

At dinner she met Mr. Hargrave once again. He was very attentive to her, but in a rough, uncouth way that was simply disgusting.

He took no pains to conceal his ardent admiration, but rather paraded it.

Mr. Vaughan was paler than usual, and seemed rather ill at ease.

He watched Madeline anxiously, and at last said to her, in a low voice:

"I know you are surprised that I should have invited Mr. Hargrave to remain. But his father was a very dear friend of mine, as I have discovered. Of course I wish to be courteous to the son."

"Yes, uncle."

He gave her a swift glance and went on:

"I know you find him ill bred. But we can put up with that. He has not had the best advantages in

the world, poor fellow. I know he has a good heart. You will remember that, and try to overlook his faults, Madeline?"

There was something in his voice that sounded like piteous entreaty. He saw the girl's eyes dilate in wonder, and the light brought him to his senses. "There, there!" he muttered. "I'm not going to plead the poor fellow's cause. He shall do that himself."

He turned abruptly away, and there was no opportunity to ask what he meant.

Several days slipped by, and nothing occurred to especially alarm poor Madeline.

Mr. Vaughan was very kind, but he seemed to keep a covert watch upon her movements—even to study the expression of her face and the inflections of her voice when she spoke. It almost seemed as if he were trying to find her weakest point, that he might take advantage of it.

Madam Leroy was like her shadow. She could not stir from the house but the disagreeable old woman followed at her heels. Could it be that she had been set to watch her? Why was she in the house at all? What good was she doing there?

"I should be happier without her," thought Madeline. "I wish I dared ask Uncle Cyril to send her away."

But some vague, unreasoning distrust prevented her from doing that.

Mr. Hargrave grew more and more offensive in his manner towards her. Sometimes, at the table, he would say things that called the hot crimson into her cheeks. He practised a thousand little stratagems to gain a private interview with her, but Madeline carefully defeated them all.

Mr. Vaughan must have seen what was going on, for after a little he was never at ease in her presence, and sometimes shrank from her with a guilty flush. She knew that he and Mr. Hargrave were often closeted together for hours.

The strange young fellow walked with madam quite frequently. He seemed to be on as good terms with her as with Mr. Vaughan.

It was all very strange. Madeline could not understand it.

"I wish Horace were here," she said to herself, more than once. And then she would shiver and glance quickly around, as if some subtle danger threatened her.

So matters went on for more than two weeks, and then, one never-to-be-forgotten day—Rose came upstairs with a message from Madam Leroy.

"You are to come down to the drawing-room. Madam is there and particularly wishes to see you."

Madeline started up to obey the summons, but Rose stopped her on the way out, her face white and scared-looking.

"I wouldn't go, if I were you," she whispered, all of a tremble. "Take my work for it, madam is up to some mischief. She was grinning like a fiend when she gave me the message."

"I must go," answered Madeline, very firm and cool. "That woman shall have no excuse for complaining of me to my uncle."

Then she tripped away. Her heart beat fast and furiously though when she turned the knob of the drawing-room door.

At first she thought the room was deserted. But a rustling noise in one of the window recesses convinced her otherwise, and, after a minute's delay, out stepped Stephen Hargrave, very much flushed and excited.

He glided swiftly between her and the door, and there stopped and spoke.

"Stratagem is admirable both in war and in love, I believe," he said, staring hard at her and speaking somewhat sullenly.

Madeline trembled all over, but for a moment anger got the better of fear.

"How long has Madam Leroy been your cat's paw?" she demanded, eyes and cheeks all aflame.

He winced a little at the words, but seemed to think it best not to notice them.

"You have been very cruel to me, miss," he said.

"You keep out of my way. You will never give me a moment of your society, if you can help it. You are not kind—you are not considerate."

"Kind?—considerate?" she echoed.

"Yes. You must have seen that I love you. You should have given me a chance to tell you so, and to ask you to become my wife."

"You?" she cried, half contemptuously. "How dare you speak to me of love? You must have known that my word is pledged to another!"

He shifted uneasily, looking down, then up again, and finally said:

"That was before you saw me, Madeline. People change their minds sometimes."

"I do not change mine, sir," she indignantly exclaimed. "Let me pass, if you please."

He caught her hand.

"One moment, miss," he cried. "Don't think

to escape me. I am too fond of you to give you up. I have your uncle's consent to our marriage, and he is your guardian."

She tore her hand from his grasp, pushed him aside, for she had the strength of two women in her sudden anger, and walked out of the room.

Mr. Vaughan's study was opposite. She crossed the hall, pushed open the door, confronted her uncle there, and, pointing back at Mr. Hargrave, who had followed her, she said, in a tremulous voice:

"That man has presumed to insult me, sir. Will you order him to leave the house?"

Mr. Vaughan's pale face flushed, and looked sullen and malignant all at once. Pausing a little, he asked:

"How has Stephen offended you?"

Madeline declined to answer. She could scarcely control her grief and rage.

"That man must leave this house at once, or I will do so," she exclaimed.

Mr. Vaughan half rose from his chair, and then fell back again. He looked a ghost, and seemed to struggle with himself, as if summoning strength to pass through some trying ordeal. At last he spoke:

"It is useless to mask my purpose, Madeline," he said, in a low, frightfully calm voice. "Stephen Hargrave's suit has my full approval. I never intended you should marry that upstart Selwyn. I made certain conditions with him merely to get him out of the way. Stephen is my choice for you; so prepare to marry him within the next twenty-four hours."

Madeline stood and stared at Mr. Vaughan. Had she gone mad? or was all the world in league against her?

"Try to be sensible, Madeline. I'm working for your good. Stephen is the best husband for you."

"I hate him! I will never marry anybody save my own true Horace! I am no child to be coerced."

Then she clasped her hands and began to sob hysterically.

There was a pause. Mr. Vaughan strode up to her and hissed out:

"So you defy me? Well, we'll see whose will is the stronger. Go to your room!"

Nearer dead than alive she crawled upstairs.

She felt bewildered, and terribly frightened. She tried to understand what all this meant, but could not.

At last Rose came upstairs. The instant she closed the door she burst out crying.

"Oh, miss, they are all in league together to do you harm. They have been trying to bribe me to betray you, and think they have succeeded."

"Oh, Rose," moaned Madeline, "you will not betray me?"

"Never, miss. But something must be done. I heard them talking. They are determined to marry you to that dreadful Mr. Hargrave to-morrow."

"Why should they persecute me so?"

"Oh, miss," said the girl, with a quick look, "you have money, and I suppose there must be some bargain between Mr. Vaughan and Mr. Hargrave."

"Oh, Heaven! How terrible!"

And yet something told Madeline that the maid had spoken the truth.

What could she do? how avert the terrible danger that threatened her?

"You must help me, Rose," she cried, wildly; "my brain is not clear. Tell me what I ought to do."

Rose put her finger to her lips.

"Hush," she whispered. "I hear steps outside. My orders are to lock you in. I must do it and go away or they will suspect. But I will return again. Don't lose courage, miss. We'll baffle them yet."

Turning swiftly, she went out, and the key clicked sharply in the lock.

Madeline was left alone all the rest of the day.

Her brain cleared as the hours wore on. She began to comprehend the nature of the treachery of which she was the intended victim.

It was long after nightfall when Rose came back again. She brought a loaded tea-tray.

Her face was deadly pale when she set down the tray and confronted her mistress.

"It's worse than I thought," she said, in a trembling voice. "I believe they will murder you if you don't marry Hargrave. They are desperate, and will not suffer your money to slip through their fingers."

"Have you thought of any plan?" asked Madeline.

"Yes. I am to stay with you to-night. Mr. Vaughan thinks I am to be trusted. When all is still I will creep out and go for help. It would not answer for us both to leave the house."

"Oh," sighed Madeline, "I wish Horace were here."

"Perhaps I can find him, miss. You may be sure I will do my best."

Scarcely another word was spoken: Rose was

a shrewd girl, and knew better than to be garrulous. She drew up a chair to the door and sat there watchful and silent.

It was past midnight before she rose up to go on her mission of mercy. She was pale, but firm.

"Lock the door behind me," she whispered, wringing Madeline's hand. "If anybody comes near it make some excuse for not letting any one in. Now Heaven be with you."

The two clung to each other almost frantically for a moment. Then Rose released herself, opened the door slowly and cautiously, and disappeared in the dark corridor.

Madeline locked the door, as she had been bidden. Afterwards she stood like a statue—listening, listening! The silence seemed awful—but it was full of hope. It told her that Rose must have succeeded in leaving the house unseen.

She did not sleep a wink. The hours seemed interminable. She felt as if she lived a lifetime in each. She could not think connectedly—she could not even pray. The spell of a great horror was upon her.

In the blank darkness that precedes the dawn the silence was broken. All of a sudden a shrill cry rang through the house—there was a struggle on the stairs—a confusion of voices, and the sound of rapidly approaching steps.

She sprang up, white and palpitating. Had succour come at last? Flinging wide the door, she darted into the passage, screaming wildly:

"Here I am! Oh, Horace—Horace!"

A dark form sprang quickly to her side. An arm slid about her, and she was drawn close to a wildly beating heart.

"Thank Heaven, my darling, I am here in time to save you," said her lover's voice, now strangely broken and tremulous.

She lay in his arms weak and helpless as a child. The corridor was dimly lighted. She saw three or four dark figures on the landing. Suddenly one of them darted forward.

It was Stephen Hargrave. He looked like a madman. He flung up his arms wildly as he advanced, and the light glittered on the blade of a knife fiercely brandished above his head.

"Curse you," he hissed, savagely, confronting Horace, "you shall not triumph over me!"

His hand quivered for a moment in the air. It would have descended with a murderous force; but a pistol shot rang out loudly at this critical juncture, and the villain staggered backward, groaning feebly, and fell with a loud crash to the floor.

Cyril Vaughan darted to his side, screaming with rage and grief.

"You have killed him—you have killed my son!"

Then he swore an awful oath, and dropped down beside the weltering body, and lifted the dying man's head in his arms.

At the same instant Madam Leroy came flying out from some dark corner where she had been hidden. Her face was livid and frightfully contorted.

"Curse you!" she shrieked, shaking her clenched fist in Madeline's face. "This is your work."

I am sure I need not linger over the scenes of that terrible night.

On leaving the house Rose had made her way to the village inn, where, fortunately, she found Horace, who had that night returned to the vicinity of the house that held Madeline, drawn thither by an unconscious he could not conquer.

A few words had sufficed to let him know the strange peril that threatened the woman he loved. Hastily securing the services of two or three trusty men, he had hurried to her rescue, guided by Rose.

I don't know whether Mr. Vaughan and his confederates suspected anything amiss or not, but at any rate they were awake and watchful when Rose arrived with those she had brought to succour her mistress.

We know what followed. It was one of the men from the inn who fired the shot that had cost Stephen Hargrave his life.

Of course the whole truth came out directly.

Stephen was really the son of Cyril Vaughan and the woman known as Madam Leroy—an illegitimate child whom Mr. Vaughan had never acknowledged before the world.

He had intended to compass a marriage between Madeline and Stephen, and thus secure the ample fortune of his niece, for Stephen was little better than a tool in his hands.

Madeline was taken away from his guardianship, and he dared offer no opposition. After a lapse of a few days he and Madam Leroy disappeared from the neighbourhood.

Madeline married Horace, and Rose went to live with them, and was always treated more like a sister than a servant by the grateful young couple.

A. R. W.

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK'S WASP.—We are sorry to record the death of the interesting wasp referred to



by Sir John Lubbock in his address at last year's meeting of the British Association. It slept away as it were. The right meaning of this dubious expression is, we hear, that it died by him. It has been deposited in the British Museum.

## FACETIÆ.

**FORGOTTEN.**—A bright, genial day when light wines are welcome is the time for the Brighton Aquarium and its Hook-toppers.—*Fun.*

**TAYLOR.**—"What's the use of trying to be honest?" asked a young man the other day of a friend. "Oh! you ought to try it once to see," was the reply.

**BRIDLEWISE.**—"Shall I cut this loin of mutton saddlewise?" said a gentleman. "No," said one of his guests; "cut it bridewise, for then I may have a chance to get a bit in my mouth."

**NO INDUCEMENT.**—Railway companies offer advantages to travellers in the shape of "return" tickets; many a man would be too glad to send his wife out of town in the guaranteed absence of that qualification.—*Fun.*

**MORE LADIES IN THE CASE.**—Our old friend "Wheat Mary Anne" has found companions at last. Among the companies lately registered is one with the sweet name of the "Catherine and Jane Lead Mining."—*Punch.*

**A DARING ENTERPRISE.**—A rumour has reached us that an influential deputation is about to seek an interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with a view to induce him to sanction (at the public expense) an expedition in search of the Lost Tribes.—*Punch.*

**EQUALITY ON HORSEBACK.**—In connection with Woman's Rights it is whispered that a movement is about to be set on foot amongst fair equestrians for the abolition of side-saddles. Why not? How charming Mrs. Rousby looked as Joan of Arc mounted!—*Punch.*

**SOCIAL DISTINCTION.**—There are people in the world who esteem it so extremely vulgar to express emotion that, if an earthquake were reported to have happened in their neighbourhood, they would consider it a proof of their good breeding not to have been moved by it.—*Punch.*

**IN THE CLOUDS.**—A little boy six years old and a little girl eight were looking at the clouds one beautiful summer evening, watching their fantastic shapes, when the boy exclaimed: "Oh, Minnie, I see a dog in the clouds." "Well, Willie," replied the sister, "it must be a sky terrier."

**THE LATEST METHOD.**—The latest method of spending the "honey-moon" is reported from Italy. An American recently met at Rome an old school-fellow whom he had not seen for years. "You here?" "Yes, my dear fellow; I have just been married, and am come to spend the honeymoon in Italy." "And your wife?" "My wife? Oh, I left her in New York!"

**A USEFUL PRESENT.**—A young lady recently presented her lover with an elaborately constructed pen-wiper, and was astonished the following Sunday to see him enter church wearing it as an ecrasur.

**MAKING AMENDS.**—A lamplighter was lately taken before the mayor on a charge of having slept at his post, and thereby failed to extinguish the lamps at daylight. The man admitted the charge, but said that he would make amends to the city for the cost of the extra gas by thereafter extinguishing the lamps early enough to more than make up for it.

## A GOOD REASON TOO.

**Lucy:** "Mamma, Charlie says he would like to be a clergyman!"

**Mamma:** "Tell me, dear, why you would like to be a clergyman."

**Charlie:** "Why, because then I could talk as much as I like in church!"—*Fun.*

**HARMONY IN THE CHURCH.**—The arrival of a new curate is always an interesting event in the annals of a parish, and to the ladies of his congregation it can never be a matter of indifference whether he is married or single, and likely to be an agreeable acquisition to society. But it is seldom that a parish is so exceptionally favoured as one in the immediate neighbourhood of London, which has just secured the services of a reverend gentleman who is described as a "musical bachelor." Of the popularity of this new curate with a large and interesting section of his flock no one with any experience of scenes of clerical life can have the slightest doubt.—*Punch.*

**SAFE, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES.**—Last Tuesday was the commencement of Easter term. On that day the Lord Chancellor gave the usual breakfast to the Judges and Queen's Counsel previously to going in procession to Westminster Hall. The newly appointed Judges were in attendance; but a great legal officer, whose office is vacant, was conspicuous by his absence, all the rather that there could not have been a more particular occasion for his presence than that of the judicial and forensic morning meal. But his place was supplied. More than one learned partaker of that repast is understood to have poked his neighbour in the ribs, and pointing to a plate of appropriate comestibles, to have whispered, grinning:—"The Lord Chancellor for the present takes the business of the Master of the Rolls."—*Punch.*

**RATHER AWKWARD!**

"Well, and how's the beauty, Mrs. Jessamy! As lovely as ever?"

"Oh, lovelier, if possible, Mr. Polkington! She's just been short-coated, poor darling, and—"

"Just—been—short—coated, Mrs. Jessamy!!!!"

"Yes, of course! My baby you mean, don't you?"

"O—g—no! I—I—I meant your opposite neighbour—Miss Helsie!"—*Punch.*

**A STRIKING LABOURER.**

In a description of Mr. Boughton's Royal Academy picture the art critic of the *Globe* rouses our curiosity by an account of an agricultural labourer who is indeed a phenomenon in a smock frock:—

There is a finely conceived contrast between the delicate little boy and the peasant who had worked upon the land before he was born, and may be on it after his death.

No wonder the agricultural labourer is on strike! To be born to work, and be "put to your hands as soon as your foot" is a hard fate enough, but imagine the poor wretch who begins to work on the land before he is born, and who, to judge from our contemporary, is not even allowed Christian burial after death. For of course the chance that he may be "on the land" after his death excludes the notion of interment, and rather suggests that the expended labourers are used as manure for the fields.—*Fun.*

## AT THE STILE—A RETROSPECT.

OFF, when the winter night wind shakes  
My casement with its boding wing,  
And on each pane the Frost Sprite makes  
The weird sign-manual of his king,

I sit beside my glowing hearth,  
And, as I watch the eddying blaze,  
My thought traverses years of earth,  
And wafts me scenes of other days.

But through the changing vista still  
One vision claims the brightest place;  
One landscape makes my pulses thrill!  
I see one well-remembered face.

How long it is I dare not say,  
But, ah! it seems a weary while  
Since, on a fragrant morn in May,  
I left fair Lillian at the stile.

She was the miller's only child—  
Ralph, the rich miller of the lea—  
A frolic maid, and spoiled, and wild,  
But, oh! how very dear to me!

I long had loved her, but I knew  
The miller would have scorned my suit;  
For year by year I poorer grew,  
While all his days bore golden fruit.

But Love will have its vent, and when  
I needs must leave the Vale awhile,  
To win my way to fortune, then  
I spoke with Lillian at the stile.

What boots her answer now? Long years  
Have passed since then, and Ralph is dead,  
And I am rich, and Lillian's tears  
Have ceased to flow, for—we are wed.

D. C. D. G.

## GEMS.

By suffering we may avoid sinning; but by sinning we cannot avoid suffering.

We open the hearts of others when we open our own.

He who gives up is soon given up; and to consider ourselves of no use is the almost certain way to become useless.

There is no greater punishment than that of being abandoned to one's self.

What matters it if one has not gold in his purse, if he has it in his heart?

Whoever would oblige himself to tell all that he has done would oblige himself to do nothing that he would be anxious to conceal.

Boasting seldom or never accompanies a sense of real power. When men feel that they can express themselves by deeds they do not often do so by words.

**ADVICE TO PARENTS.**—Be ever gentle with the children Heaven has given to you; watch them constantly; reprove them earnestly, but not in anger.

In the forcible language of Scripture, "Do not bite against them." "Yes, they are good boys," we once heard a kind father say; "I talk to them pretty much, but I do not like to beat my children—the world will beat them." It was a beautiful thought, though not elegantly expressed. Yes, there is not one child in the circle round the table, happy and healthy as they look now, on whose head, if long spared, the storm will not beat. Adversity may wither them, illness fade, a cold world frown on them; but, amid all, let memory carry them back to a home where a law of kindness reigned, where the mother's reproving eye was moistened with a tear, and the father frowned "more in sorrow than in anger."

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**SALAD DRESSING.**—Salads are acceptable and useful in spring. Some like them served with a mixture of sugar and vinegar. The regular salad dressing is made with the yolks of three or four hard-boiled eggs mashed smooth with a piece of butter the size of a walnut, and vinegar added to taste—mixed with the lettuce just as it goes to table.

**CREAM CAKES.**—Put one cup of water and one cup of butter on the stove to boil; when boiling stir in two cups of flour, and when cool add five well-beaten eggs; drop this on your baking-tin, one spoonful in a place, and rub each over with the white of an egg. Bake in a hot oven. For the cream boil one pint of milk, and when boiling stir in two eggs, one cup of sugar and one half-cup of flour beaten together, with a little cold milk, and let it boil till sufficiently thick. Flavour with lemon.

## STATISTICS.

**VALUE OF IMPORTS OF RAW COTTON.**—The value of raw cotton imported into the United Kingdom in the three months ending March 31, this year, was 17,533,518*l.*, as compared with 18,538,917*l.* in the corresponding period of 1872, and 18,738,015*l.* in the corresponding period of 1871. In these totals the United States figured for 12,017,610*l.*, 10,242,946*l.*, and 13,857,624*l.* respectively, and Egypt for 3,159,396*l.*, 3,258,885*l.*, and 2,303,622*l.* respectively.

**VALUE OF IMPORTED PAPER.**—The value of paper for printing or writing in the last three months was 172,312*l.*, in the same period in 1872 135,344*l.*. The largest quantity came from Belgium, amounting to 121,576*l.*

## MISCELLANEOUS.

**THE ROYAL ALBERT YACHT CLUB.**—The Queen has been pleased to signify through Sir T. Biddulph her intention of giving a cup, value 100 guineas, to be sailed for at the forthcoming annual regatta of the Royal Albert Yacht Club.

**THE BRUSSELS PICTURE EXHIBITION.**—An International Exhibition of Pictures of Ancient Schools is to be held shortly at Brussels, to which many distinguished owners, among whom it is stated is Her Majesty, have promised to contribute.

**EMBEZZLEMENT OF RATES.**—A man named Mackay, employed as a collector of poor rates in Lerwick, Shetland, was sentenced at the High Court of Justiciary to nine months' imprisonment for embezzling upwards of 100*l.* of the rates.

**ARMY RAILWAY DETACHMENTS IN AUSTRIA.**—The Emperor of Austria has approved of the establishment of five additional railway detachments for the army in case of war. This makes a total of fifteen detachments, five of which are to be actively employed in time of peace as sappers and miners.

**A CHANGE OF FORTUNE.**—Miss Hadley, 81 years of age, who has been an inmate of Oakham Workhouse, Rutland, for 16 years, has come into possession of 7,000*l.*, and may succeed to 14,000*l.* more. She was the daughter of a surgeon formerly practising at Oakham.

**DUBLIN EXHIBITION.**—The Committee of the Loan Museum of the Dublin Exhibition of 1873 have resolved to open it to the public on May 14. It is under the patronage of the Prince of Wales and a number of gentlemen, who are exerting themselves with considerable activity to make it successful.

**THE GUILLOTINE IN PARIS.**—The assistant executioner has just died at Paris, probably from over-exertion, for though there are members of the government averse to capital punishment the guillotine has never been plied so briskly since the Reign of Terror as at present.

**THE "SANCTY STRADIVARIUS."**—Mr. David Laurie, Glasgow, had just sold to a distinguished musical amateur in Edinburgh a magnificent Cremona violin, known as the "Sancty Stradivarius" for the large sum of 350*l.* The date of the violin is 1713, and it is in perfect preservation.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JOHN R.—The announcement will appear in the usual manner.

JOHN D.—Forward your announcement in the usual manner.

SUFFERER.—Inform us how the discoloration in question was caused, or how it originated, and we will then endeavour to counsel you.

G. WHITFIELD.—Quite fair in regard to versification but certainly commonplace as to sentiment. The subject, unless treated in a novel manner, must be held to be done up.

A SUBSCRIBER FOR SEVEN YEARS.—The I O U remains valid, unless you can prove your payment of it. You made a great mistake in not insisting on its return at the time when you repaid the money.

ZET.—We cannot undertake to bind ourselves in any case to return rejected communications. If you are accustomed to write for serial publications—monthly or weekly—you will be aware that that is the usual practice. It is always desirable therefore to retain a copy.

C. E. E.—Bigamy not being allowed, such a second marriage during the lifetime of the first wife would be manifestly illegal. The man might, however, be prosecuted for bigamy, and the law would descend heavily upon him.

R. S. S.—Declined with our best thanks. The "Sobs from the Atlantic" is in our judgment rather commonplace, how well-intentioned soever. The "Epitaph" is a creditable production, but its verse is irregular in execution; a fault which would condemn such a poetic composition.

AN OLD SUB.—Make them such an offer, and you will probably satisfactorily settle the matter. Otherwise we rather fear they could "touch the goods" for the balance of the account. If, however, you make them a reasonable offer—such as that you propose—they would surely be hardly likely to attempt so extreme a proceeding.

R. P. S.—For diseases arising from, or accompanied with acidity in the stomach, take of prepared chalk, 1 oz.; refined sugar, 1 oz.; mucilage of gum arabic, 2 oz.; rub them together and then add by degrees water 2 pints, spirituous cinnamon water 2 ounces. This is a most useful remedy. The dose requires no nicety. It may be taken to the extent of a pint or two in the course of a day.

JESSIE.—Here are two methods for making pomade to remove freckles. 1. Citrine ointment 1 drachm; simple ointment 7 drachms; otto of roses 3 drops; 2. Elder flower ointment 1 oz.; sulphate of zinc (levigated) 20 grains; mix by trituration in a wedgewoodware mortar. Both the above, applied night and morning, are excellent remedies for either cold or summer freckles. 2. Perhaps your handwriting slightly lacks character; but it is exceedingly neat, and perfectly adapted for business purposes.

M. E. B.—There are various institutions which would serve your purpose, except where you require to raise the 20s. Charitable societies and charitable persons, commonly so called, much object to hand over money to the poor. But read over Fry's Manual of London Charities. In any case, however, we fear you would require considerable personal interest, but perhaps you might be able to obtain that through your friends. Are you acquainted, for instance, with any of the clergy in your neighbourhood? It is their duty to consider and to advise in the business of the poor and the distressed.

HELEN M.—1. It is manifest that latent indigestion occasions the disagreeable sensation you mention, although you may not think it. There is no other probable cause. Any chemist would prepare for you (at a cost of about a shilling) a mixture of taraxacum (made by the way from the common dandelion) and muriatic acid, which might be taken three daily. In a few weeks you would, we think, begin to discern some improvement. Meanwhile do not fret concerning what after all is a comparatively trivial matter. People ought to know better than to ridicule you, and we think extremely little of their good taste. In your diet, also, avoid all heating condiments, and drink only milk, water, or wine and water. 2. The handwriting is fair and is wholly legible, yet it is capable of improvement. Practice makes perfect.

H. C.—Leather gloves, if not greasy, may be dyed with any of the ordinary dyes by brushing the latter over when stretched and smooth. The surface alone should be wetted, and a second or third may be given after the former has become dry. When the last coat has become thoroughly dry the superfluous colour should be well

rubbed out, a smooth surface given them by rubbing them with a polished stick or piece of ivory, and the whole gone over with a sponge dipped in the white of egg. 2. The feathers are first thoroughly washed with soap and water, to free them from any oil they may contain. Next they are transferred to a bath composed of bicarbonate of potash dissolved in water to which has been added a few drops of sulphuric acid. In this bath they rapidly lose their colour, and become almost white. On removal they are to be well rinsed in water, and are then fit to be dyed even the most delicate colour. Great care is requisite lest the flue of the feather should be destroyed by being kept too long in the bath. Feathers may be dyed by simple immersion in a bath of any of the aniline colours. 3. To clean and starch point lace. Fix the lace in a prepared tent, draw it straight, make a warm lather of Castile soap, and with a fine brush dipped in rub over the point gently. When it is clean on one side do the same to the other; then throw some clean water on it in which a little alum has been dissolved so as to remove the ends, and having some this starch, go over with the same on the wrong side, and iron it on the same side when dry, then open it with a bodkin and set it in order. To clean point lace, if not very dirty, without washing, fix it in a tent as the former, and go over with fine bread, the crust being pared off, and when that is done carefully dust out the crumbs.

INQUIRER.—James Gillray, the celebrated caricaturist, was born about 1745. At an early age he joined a company of strolling players, but soon left them, and applied himself to art studies in London, finally adopting caricature as his field. He started with republican sentiments, and mercilessly ridiculed George the Third and his ministers; but he subsequently accepted an offer which was made to him to cease his attacks on the King, the Court, and Pitt, and thenceforth directed his satire against Fox and the opposition, and especially against Buonaparte. Gillray engraved all his own plates; and for about thirty years stood at the head of his profession as political caricaturist. Collections of his designs have been frequently published, and a descriptive account of them by Wright and Evans appeared in 1851. Gillray led an irregular life, became insane, and died in 1815.

## PROVIDENCE IMPARTIAL.

## A FABLE.

An old Hellenic saw declares  
The gods, who govern men's affairs,  
Impartial (grumble as we may),  
For all their favours make us pay.  
According to their special worth;  
Wealth, honour, beauty, noble birth,  
Has each its price; and still the higher  
The gift the more the gods require!  
Hence, let not foolish pride inflate  
The seeming favourites of fate.  
A fir-tree very large and tall  
That grew beside a bramble small  
Was boasting of its strength and size:  
"What houses I would make!" he cries;  
"While you are simply good for naught,  
Unworthy of the woodman's thought!"  
"True!" said the bramble; "but reflect—  
If he were here, would you elect  
(Think of his axe, and tell me, sir)  
To be a bramble or a fir?"

J. G. S.

H. R. T. (Newport).—Henry Jenkins, a reputed centenarian, was an inhabitant of the parish of Bolton in Yorkshire. The story is that he was born about 1501, was 12 years old at the battle of Flodden Field, which he could remember, and lived one hundred and sixty-nine years, dying at Ellerton on Swale, December 8, 1670. He was a poor man, and could neither read nor write; he swam once on an assize trial to a right of way existing for 140 years; and he retained his faculties to the last. The hard struggles and anxious occupations of modern life, superinduced chiefly by a redundant population and a consequent infinite competition, render the attainment of extreme old age constantly more unlikely.

SARAH, seventeen, tall, a country blonde. Respondent must be tall and dark.

CECIL V., twenty-seven, fair, and medium height. Respondent must be dark, and about eighteen.

LOTTIE, nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, and loving. Respondent must be good looking, affectionate, and fond of home.

BEATRICE W., twenty-one, tall, handsome, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, steady, and loving.

JACQUES, twenty-four, dark, good looking, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be well educated, pretty and affectionate.

LAVINA, nineteen, fair, medium height, auburn hair, pretty, and fond of music. Respondent must be tall, fair, and affectionate.

DANIEL, twenty-one, considered handsome, and loving. Respondent must be about eighteen, pretty, loving, and domesticated.

JENIMA, twenty-three, dark, considered good looking, and fond of singing. Respondent must be tall, dark, and affectionate.

FRED F., medium height, dark, and of a loving disposition, wishes to correspond with a good-looking young woman.

BEATRICE, twenty-two, medium height, a brunette, wishes to correspond with a tall, dark young man; a mechanic preferred.

X. Y. Z., twenty-four, tall, dark, fond of home and respectably connected. Respondent must be dark, good tempered, musical, well educated, and about twenty.

LINA, seventeen, medium height, rather dark, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall and handsome, with a little money.

BEATRICE, twenty, of a respectable family, good looking, and domesticated. Respondent must be kind, loving, and fond of home and children.

MATILDA, twenty-three, a domestic servant, medium height, dark, hazel eyes, brown hair, and loving. Respondent must be twenty-five, tall, fair, and in a good situation.

DAVID, twenty-two, medium height, of good appearance, the son of a tradesman, and possessing good expectations, would like to correspond with a young lady

about nineteen or twenty, domesticated, and affectionate.

SPIRIT OF THE STORM, twenty-three, 5ft. 5in., an officer in the Merchant Service, and fair. Respondent must be about eighteen or nineteen, good looking, able to play the piano and sing.

W. M., twenty-two, 5ft. 7in., fair complexion, auburn hair, blue eyes, considered handsome, and fond of home. Respondent must be about his own age, musical, and affectionate.

GENEVA ST. CLARE, tall, fair hair, dark eyes, affectionate, domesticated, and fond of music. Respondent must be tall, dark, handsome, fond of home, and good tempered; a hairdresser preferred.

EMILY, eighteen, rather tall, brown hair, blue eyes, domesticated, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be tall, dark, loving, and fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

HUDSON, twenty-five, 5ft. 6in., dark complexion, brown hair, hazel eyes, of an affectionate disposition, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty, good tempered, loving, and domesticated.

WALTER W., twenty-eight, middle height, light complexion, possessing fair prospects, desires to meet with a pretty and domesticated lady, who would be willing to share his fortunes as an emigrant.

A. B. C., twenty-one, medium height, dark, well educated, and in a good position. Respondent must be fair, musical, good looking, well educated, and about eighteen.

DORA, twenty, fair complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, medium height, well educated, and loving. Respondent must be about twenty-five, nice looking, tall, and fond of home and children.

CLARA, twenty, tall, dark, rather pretty, and good tempered, wishes to correspond with a young man about twenty-two, must be steady, respectable, and fond of home; a tradesman preferred.

SELINA G., twenty-three, medium height, dark-brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, and good tempered. Respondent must be good tempered and fond of home and children.

THOMAS, twenty, fair, golden hair, blue eyes, considered very pretty, wishes to correspond with a young gentleman of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

JENNIE W., nineteen, medium height, fair complexion, loving, and a housemaid. Respondent must be about twenty-three, tall, dark, fond of home, and of a loving disposition; a tradesman preferred.

AMICE, nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, loving, and considered pretty. Respondent must be tall, dark, fond of home and affectionate; a mechanic preferred.

CLEMENTINA, twenty-three, medium height, dark complexion, dark hair and eyes, and would make an affectionate wife. Respondent must be tall, and handsome.

LYDIA, eighteen, dark-brown hair, blue eyes, medium height. Respondent must be about twenty-three, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, musical, fond of home and children.

FLORA, twenty-two, fair, medium height, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-five, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, and fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

LESLIE, twenty-eight, tall, dark-brown hair, fair complexion, blue eyes, wishes to correspond with a young lady about twenty-one, loving, and thoroughly domesticated.

SUSAN, nineteen, medium height, fair, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-three, dark complexion, blue eyes, and fond of home and children.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

B. B. B. is responded to by—"May."

LOVELY FANNY by—"Amicus," a sergeant in the Army, has a little money, considered handsome, and of an affectionate disposition.

ELLEN by—"Alexander C.," twenty-one, tall, dark, considered handsome, loving, fond of home and is a mechanic.

HENRY B. by—"Anna," twenty-three, medium height, and very affectionate.

EDMUND by—"Rosanna F.," twenty-three, tall, dark, and loving.

SIDNEY by—"Georgina M.," eighteen, very fair, blue eyes, loving, and a tradesman's daughter.

AGNES G. by—"George," who thinks he is all she requires.

THOMAS J. by—"Sally C.," eighteen, tall, brown hair, fair complexion, black eyes, loving, and thoroughly domesticated.

M. M. by—"Ettie," eighteen, medium height, light hair, blue eyes, considered pretty, loving, and domesticated.

CHARLES by—"Henrietta," nineteen, fair, brown hair, dark eyes, of a loving disposition, and thoroughly domesticated.

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